MUTENESS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: A CRITICAL STUDY

A Dissertation

by

HEATHER CATHERINE KISSACK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2012

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

Muteness in Organizational Computer-Mediated Communication: A Critical Study.

(May 2012)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Jamie L. Callahan

The purpose of this study was to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Qualitative textual analysis was used to analyze 18 discussion forums from three voluntary professional associations representing highly male-populated (mechanical engineering), gender neutral (training and development), and highly female-populated (nursing) industries. Discussion posting participants were categorized for using male-preferential (MP), female-preferential (FP), or neutral (N) language. MP and FP interactions were then analyzed for themes of mut*ing* and mute*ness*. Specifically, feminist critical discourse analysis was employed to answer the research question: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and, if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language. Two sub-questions helped to inform the study: 1) What male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance?

Seven major findings within three analytic categories emerged from this study. First, with regards to preferential language use by industry site, all three sites' participants used FP language more than MP language. Of the 246 participants, 158 were categorized as FP language users and 17 of the 18 forums were initiated by a FP participant. Implications for scaling preferential language dimensions along a continuum from highly feminine to highly masculine are discussed.

Second, regarding strategies of maintaining male dominance (mut*ing*), it was found that MP language dimensions were used more often by MP participants when interacting with FP participants. Themes of muting strategies were found in MP language. This context allows MP language users to trivialize FP language users' postings. Additionally, although use of masculine and feminine pronouns were equal, FP participants were overwhelmingly more likely to use masculine pronouns than MP participants were likely to use feminine pronouns.

Finally, with regards to strategies of FP communication (mute*ness*), FP participants engaged mostly in *respectful communication* as a strategy to communicate. The communication strategy used least was *confrontation*. An emergent strategy of communication was the increased use of metaphors by FP participants when interacting with MP participants.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To Brandon for his calming voice of reason. To Elizabeth for providing insight through unique and courageous perspectives. To my mother, Janece, for her dedication and loving actions in support of our family's dreams. And, especially, to my father, William, for his unending confidence in my abilities and encouragement of my goals, and for providing unequivocal support while I work to achieve them.

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I would also like to acknowledge my friends, colleagues, and the department faculty and staff for welcoming me into the program and supporting me through my degree completion. To my friends, I thank you for your understanding and patience as I worked to accomplish this goal. To my colleagues, I appreciate your advice and your unending words of encouragement. To the department faculty and staff, I am grateful for a working environment full of individuals who are helpful, supportive, and eager to facilitate students' success. I graduate with a sense of community and camaraderie because of your efforts.

Finally, thanks to my family, especially to my mother and father, for their love and support. I am extremely fortunate to have such encouraging professional and social networks.

NOMENCLATURE

CMC	Computer-mediated Communication
HRD	Human resource development
FP	Female-preferential
MP	Male-preferential
FCDA	Feminist critical discourse analysis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> *'When* I *use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'*
> *'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you* can *make words mean so many different things.'*
> *'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.'*
>
> *-Lewis Carroll*

There is no shortage of interest in communication by, and between, women and men. This is evidenced by the seemingly unending volumes of books written on the subject for both scholarly audiences and the general public. Just as the quote above illustrates Alice and Humpty Dumpty engaging in a debate regarding one's capacity to shape the meaning of words, men and women have long struggled to understand each other's intended meaning during conversation, as each often seems to be speaking a different language.

Utilizing muted group theory, and co-cultural communication theory, this study takes a critical look at how female-preferential language, a prescribed form of language use for women, and male-preferential language, a prescribed form of language use for men, interact within organizational computer-mediated communication (CMC). As such, this study focuses whether the presence of a specific social cue, gender-

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This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*.

preferential language, reifies a masculine status quo while muting female-preferential voice within professional CMC.

The purpose of this feminist critical discourse analysis is to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Muteness of female-preferential voice, as defined here, refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language system. As Ardener (1975b) states, "the phenomenon of 'mutedness' (it must be warned) is a technically defined condition of structures—not some condition of linguistic silence... the muted structures are 'there' but cannot be 'realized' in the language of the dominant structure" (p. 22). That is, this understanding of *mute* is not to be equated with literal silence (i.e. not speaking), although silence *can* be a strategy employed by non-dominant group members during interactions with dominant group members (Orbe, 1996). The purpose of this study was accomplished through employing qualitative textual analyses (guided by feminist critical discourse analysis) utilizing the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories.

It is expected that the findings and knowledge produced from this study will bring attention to, and transformation of, the power ingrained within language structures in written organizational communication; and specifically within the field of human resource development (HRD). HRD as a professional and academic field is concerned with the "developing and unleashing [of] human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving

performance" (Swanson & Holton, 2001). As such, recognition of what, and who, are rendered mute within organizational structures (such as CMC) informs developmental initiatives that seek to improve performance.

This chapter begins by providing a framework of the current study through an overview of its conceptual background and context. Following this overview, the problem statement, statement of purpose, research questions, and research approach are discussed. Finally, a discussion on the study's assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and need for the study conclude the chapter.

Background and Context

Author John Gray highlights language differences between men and women in his 1992 best-selling book, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Although fraught with stereotypical analogies (e.g. men go to their 'caves' when upset and women run the 'Home-Improvement Committee'), Gray's underlying argument is that men and women have differing communication and speech patterns which may be interpreted by the opposite sex in unintended ways. For better communication, Gray argues, women and men must understand these differences and learn to communicate in Martian and Venusian, respectively. Yet, whose interests are ultimately served by dichotomizing communication as inherently static according to biological sex? Wood (2002) warns that Gray's advice is not only misguided, but it is dangerous and imprudent "because it divests humans of agency and it ignores consequential inequities between women and men that arise from socially constructed and sustained differences" (p. 203). In other words, if 'Martian' is *inherent* for the male sex, and it is the dominant language within

society, then 'Venusian', inherent to the female sex, is *innately* inferior. Women, born into inferiority, thus have no recourse for equality other than embracing the 'Martian' language.

Deborah Tannen's (1990) best-selling work, *You just don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, similarly suggests that the sexes have fundamental communication differences which may be alleviated by understanding those differences. For example, Tannen suggests that women engage in "trouble talk" (i.e. discussing one's problems) as a way to enhance closeness and personal connections; yet, men often perceive this as a request for advice and offer solutions rather than the empathetic ear women are seeking. Tannen's assumption of men's and women's communication is that acknowledgement and understanding of differences are the key to more effective communication. Similar to Gray, Tannen assumes inherent, unchanging, gendered language differences that each sex must recognize in order to improve communication.

Both Tannen and Gray provide explanations of these assumed intrinsic differences and how they may lead to miscommunication. The presumption both authors make is that, although different, both sexes' communication styles are of equal social reverence. Yet, as scholars and researchers argue (e.g. Cameron, 1998; Wood, 2002), a separate, but equal, perspective on gender and communication ignores the social power afforded to men in patriarchal societies. Moreover, the assumption that men and women have *natural* communication differences serves to essentialize both sexes as having universal ways to communicate; a belief which promulgates stereotypes that reinforce and deepen gendered power inequities.

Computer-Mediated Communication

The advent and popularity of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the 1980s initially challenged the assertion of inherent gender communication differences. CMC, defined as written text-based interaction through the medium of a computer (Walther, 1996), lacks expressive social cues such as physical appearance, voice tone and pitch, body language, and other nonverbal communication. As such, it was thought to equalize status differences such that all voices were the same online (Garton & Wellman, 1995). However, subsequent research soon began to show that, while biological sex may not be visible through text, *gender* is visible (Colley & Todd, 2002; Herring, 2003; Panteli, 2002). Factors such as textual power cues (Panteli, 2002), discourse style (Herring, 2003), and topic content (Colley & Todd, 2002) give away one's gender online. These CMC gender differences were soon coined as *gender-preferential language*, and defined as the "linguistic variables that in one setting or another make between-group distinctions" (Fitzpatrick, Mulac, & Dindia, 1995, p. 19).

Not only did these preferential language findings debunk the notion that CMC was a social status equalizer, they also demonstrated the flexibility of gender-preferential language (Fitzpatrick, et al., 1995), through findings that *both* sexes are capable of engaging in male- and female-preferential language (Janssen & Murachver, 2004). These findings coincide with the notion that language style is socially prescribed rather than a natural characteristic of one's sex (Prentice & Carranza, 2003; Staley, 1982). That is, women and men style their language communication in ways that are expected and prescribed through social norms. This socialization begins early in life when one's

biological sex influences their gender socialization (Staley, 1982). The distinction between *sex* and *gender* is thus an important one. Oakley's (1972) explanation serves as an operational definition for both:

> 'Sex' is a word that refers to biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. 'Gender' however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine.' (p. 16)

CMC, Gender-Preferential Language, and the Workplace

Gender social prescriptions are none more evident than in the workplace, which is traditionally a highly masculine environment structured to keep the gendered status quo (Höpfl, 2002). Although the totality of workplaces run the gamut in structure, size, culture, philosophy and strategy, mainstream (masculine) bureaucracies have touted sweeping economic success and, as such, serve to shape, and be shaped by, social prescriptions that place masculinity as superior to femininity (Lazar, 2005). It follows that organizational communication, more so than casual communication, tends to privilege masculinity and, by consequence, male-preferential language.

Additionally, organizations have embraced the efficient and cost-saving computer-mediated communication boom of the 1980s (Dabbish & Kraut, 2006). What began with a groundbreaking way to send written messages electronically (email) has evolved into a daily routine fraught with instant messages (IMs), chat rooms, discussion forums, web logs (blogs), and mobile text messages. CMC has quickly become the

central mode of communication within organizations (with email remaining the most prevalent; Dabbish & Kraut, 2006).

Given the findings of previous research that gender-preferential language is perceptible within CMC, and given the pronounced preference toward masculinity in the workplace, it follows that CMC (the dominant mode of communication within organizations) continues to reinforce hegemonic processes and structures that value what, and who, is masculine over what, and who, is feminine at an exaggerated level. The field of human resource development, with concerns rooted in the cultivation and improvement of organizational structures, processes, viability, and *communication* through developing employees (Torraco & Swanson, 1995), has yet to address this critical possibility with thorough research.

This study brings attention to, and initiates change for, this issue by utilizing muted group theory, and an extension of it, co-cultural communication theory, to analyze organizational CMC. Both of these theories argue that language is structured and developed by dominant groups, thus requiring non-dominant groups to communicate within their prescribed (non-dominant) form of the dominant language. As a result, non-dominant groups (i.e., groups who are subject to hegemonic domination) are *mute* due to the structure and processes of social systems. While both of these theories have been used to research spoken, face-to-face social interactions (e.g. Abdel-Monem, Bingham, Marincic, & Tomkins, 2010; Bowes & Domokos, 1996; Burnett, et al., 2009), to date, they have not been used in research on written computer-mediated communication within the highly masculinized environments of organizations. Moreover, both theories

were *founded* upon the use of spoken language, where physical and/or audible social cues are present, rather than written language. Although an implicit assumption of the theories is that non-dominant groups are muted regardless of the communication medium, this study seeks evidence of that assumption within online written text. Therefore, this study extends muted group and co-cultural communication theories by addressing whether and how muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication.

Problem Statement

Numerous studies show that written language displays gendered characteristics (Fitzpatrick, et al., 1995; Janssen & Murachver, 2004; Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001). These preferential language styles can be utilized by either sex (Thomson, Murachver & Green, 2001); yet social prescriptions discourage the sexes from engaging in gender-preferential language that is counter to their gender role (e.g. males engaging in female-preferential language; Holmes, 1997). Thus, according to the tenets of muted group theory, non-dominant groups are not only unable to formulate or use a language representative of their experiences (i.e. have voice); they also must assimilate to their prescribed form of the dominant group's language (e.g. women are socialized to use female-preferential language). As Nakayama (2005) states, "whatever voices speak, they are already enmeshed in a social system of communication; they never speak freely... no matter what language we choose, our voices and our performances are already enmeshed in the system of domination" (p. 67).

Applying these notions to work organizations, most of which tend to be highly masculine environments (Höpfl, 2002), the muting of female-preferential voice is only exacerbated. While efforts have been made to reduce gender disparity within organizations (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action initiatives), those efforts have done little to understand muteness (Osterman, 1982). Computer-mediated communication (CMC), once heralded as a medium for egalitarian communication, is now recognized as conveying many social cues that maintain hierarchical distances. As organizations have increasingly turned to CMC with which to operate and conduct business, a critical look at whether or not it promulgates muteness of what (and who) is feminine is needed.

Although the HRD field has incorporated CMC into numerous HRD initiatives (e.g. online training, online mentoring, and virtual teams), comprehensive research efforts and a focus on the implications of CMC within HRD initiatives have yet to be explored. Given findings that gender-preferential language is perceptible within CMC, and given the pronounced preference toward masculinity in the workplace, it follows that CMC (the dominant mode of communication within organizations) continues to reinforce hegemonic processes and structures that value male-preferential attributes over female-preferential attributes at an exaggerated level. This study seeks to address that issue by uncovering whether and how the presence of gender-preferential language reifies a masculine status quo while muting female-preferential voice within professional computer-mediated communication (CMC) media.

Purpose

The broad, epistemological, purpose of this study is rooted in the critical research paradigm that "aims to produce a particular form of knowledge that seeks to realize an emancipatory interest, specifically through a critique of consciousness and ideology… that rejects the self-evident nature of reality and acknowledges the various ways in which reality is distorted" (Carr, 2000, p. 209). This is achieved through the specific purpose of uncovering whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Muteness of female-preferential voice, as defined here, refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language system. A better understanding of whether muteness occurs lends itself to organizational change efforts seeking to embrace diversity (Kissack, 2010) and moves toward a more egalitarian organizational environment; whereby, all voices are given equal credence. This study also brings awareness to organizational members who are mut*ed* and to those who are mut*ing*. Indeed, an organizational research study with a critical focus "aims to create a disjuncture between organizational members and the dominant interpretation of the events in their lives… It aims to undermine the veneer of a stable reality that organizational members take for granted" (Putnam, Bantz, Deetz, Mumby, & van Maanan, 1993, p. 225).

Research Questions

In conjunction with the purpose, the following research questions guided this study: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and,

if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language? Two sub-questions helped to inform the study: 1) What male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? As a qualitative research study, these questions were malleable to the ongoing findings. That is to say, although they guided the research methods, they were also re-shaped and refined as findings emerged.

Research Approach

The purpose of this feminist critical discourse analysis was accomplished through qualitative textual analyses (utilizing the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories through feminist critical discourse analysis) within voluntary professional discussion forums. Discussed within this section are overviews of sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, and the epistemological background considerations for qualitative research.

Sampling Procedures

Participants were members within at least one of three voluntary professional associations who posted within at least one of the six discussion forums selected to be analyzed. In total, 246 participants contributed to 681 postings within the 18 discussion forums that were analyzed.

Data Collection

Three professional organizations were selected based on male and female industry involvement and the presence of discussion forums that are visible to the public.

One site was chosen within a highly male dominated industry, one within a highly female dominated industry, and one within a relatively gender neutral industry. Within each site, six forum topics were selected based primarily on their size (number of postings) and secondarily on their relevance to HRD.

The data was copied from the forums and saved by topic to password-protected Microsoft (MS) Word files. Screen names were changed to generic pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2, P3) in order to eliminate identifying information. The forums were then copied to NVIVO (qualitative analysis software) where data analysis was conducted.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was twofold. First, the data was analyzed for whether it represented male-preferential language or female-preferential language based upon Thomson and Murachver (2001) and Thomson's (2006) 18 gendered language dimensions. The unit of analysis in determining a participant's preferential language was the culmination of their postings across all topics. Second, using the tenets of co-cultural and muted group theories, coding guided by the 12 co-cultural communication strategies was done while constantly comparing the textual interactions between male- and female-preferential language for muting processes and strategies. Themes of dominance and submission presented an image of muting as a process of dominant/non-dominant interactions occurred.

Epistemological Background

The overall epistemological perspective of this study is *critical*. Critical research examines and challenges the status quo. This type of research often contests assumed

truths and accepted processes and structures to reveal how they serve the interests of particular individuals or groups. Specifically, this study embodies feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) which critiques discourse for maintaining patriarchal hegemony. Hegemony is defined here as "noncoercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests" (Mumby, 1997, p. 344). In other words, FCDA researchers critique "relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group" (Lazar, 2005, p. 5).

Operating within critical epistemological assumptions, participants, in conjunction with the researcher, are co-constructing truth from, and within, the data. In this way, FCDA researchers often borrow from naturalistic inquiry regarding assumptions about knowledge and the quality of research. Naturalistic inquiry adheres to the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in ensuring methodological standards of quality. Research is trustworthy when it has high credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Traditional research, on the other hand, adhering to the scientific notion of rigor, is concerned with internal validity, external validity (generalizability), reliability, and objectivity. Whether research is informed by non-traditional, or traditional, methodologies, it necessitates quality standards. The current study took steps, as outlined in Chapter III, to ensure that all four areas of trustworthiness are achieved.

Assumptions

Four main assumptions underlie this study. First, it is assumed that the participants within the discussion forums have been socialized within patriarchal hegemony and thus utilize male- and female-preferential language according to such social prescriptions. Hegemony is defined here as "noncoercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests" (Mumby, 1997, p. 344). This assumption is based on the knowledge that the three research sites targeted for this study are founded and headquartered within the United States.

Second, it is assumed that participants are active within and representative of the industry which the research site supports. Research sites were selected based upon industry data regarding men's and women's representation within the workforce. These data were obtained through the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) within the U.S. Department of Labor. It is assumed that the voluntary professional associations targeted for this study within the three industries selected (a male-dominated, a female-dominated, and a gender neutral site) maintain members representative of these statistics.

Third, it is assumed that muting strategies are visible (i.e. detectable through qualitative textual analysis) within CMC despite the relative *invisibility* of muted voices. Neither muted group theory, nor co-cultural communication theory, offer notions of whether muting may be identified or remedied. However, co-cultural communication theory proposes 12 strategies employed by muted groups in reaction to their interactions

with dominant group members. These strategies were used to determine whether muting occurs within organizational discussion forums.

Finally, it is assumed that determining if muting occurs serves an emancipatory interest for muted groups. As discussed, this study is housed within critical epistemological goals that aim to challenge assumed social structures (such as language) and reveal oppression (such as muteness) for the ultimate purpose of emancipation and empowerment of oppressed groups. It is assumed that by uncovering muting within organizational discussion forums by the dominant group (users of male-preferential language), the muted group (in this case, users of female-preferential language) has the opportunity to become emancipated and, more importantly, empowered to enact change.

Delimitations

In order to make this study a manageable research venture, some boundary conditions were set. First, the type of organizational CMC selected to be analyzed was discussion forums. Organizational discussion forums are defined here as asynchronous online message boards grouped by topic provided by a professional organization, association, or institution. The forums selected are viewable to the public, but require organizational membership to add postings. Discussion forums were chosen because they are a relatively new addition to organizational CMC (in contrast to other forms of CMC such as emails and instant messages) and, as such, have received little research attention in the HRD field. Additionally, discussion forums provide interactions by and between varieties of individuals, allowing for data rich in dominant/non-dominant interactions.

Second, the selection of three specific industries (one to represent highly female-preferential language, one highly male-preferential language, and one representing relatively gender neutral language) is delimiting. It was beyond the limits of this study to analyze the myriad of professional discussion forums available on the internet. By selecting feminine, masculine, and neutral examples of organizational discussion forums, one can see whether muting occurs across differing gendered contexts. Furthermore, the selection of a relatively neutral HRD forum directly speaks to ways in which HRD professionals, themselves, are muting and being muted.

Finally, the professional organizations within the three industries were selected according to whether or not their websites had discussion forums that are viewable to the public, but require membership to participate. There are two purposes behind this condition. First, the data is publicly available and accessible. Second, the organizations required membership in order to allow individuals to participate within the forums. The latter condition reduced the chance that non-industry participants provided data by posting within the forums.

Limitations

Where delimitations make the study manageable, they also present some limitations to the study. First, this study serves to analyze a snapshot of data from three organizations. It can therefore not speak to how language has *evolved* to be more or less muting of non-dominant groups (or if muting has evolved at all). However, adding the variable of time to this research topic would be an interesting focus for future studies.

Second, potential limits of transferability within this study occur due to the narrowing by industry and a specific organization within the industry. This potentially elicits specific audiences with which not all groups may identify.

Another limitation concerns the lack of time and resources to analyze the entire text of the three chosen organizations' discussion forums. As mentioned, only six forums are chosen from each organization for analysis. To accommodate for this limitation, the data was analyzed until theoretical saturation was met. Thus, when the analysis displayed recurring themes and no new information was surfacing, theoretical saturation was met. At that point, it was superfluous to continue analyzing data.

Finally, targeting discussion forums rather than other forms of CMC (e.g. emails or instant messages) also presents a limitation. It is possible that the muting within discussion forums is wholly different than within organizational emails. An interesting follow-up study would be to analyze other forms of organizational CMC for their muting characteristics as similar or dissimilar to discussion forums.

Need for the Study

The purpose of this FCDA study was to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Utilizing the anthropological lens of muted group and co-cultural communication theories provided an innovative perspective with which to consider these patterns in the area of organizational CMC.

The crossover between CMC literature and gender-preferential language literature has mostly involved research looking for the textual characteristics of male-

preferential and female-preferential language in showing that it is, indeed, present within CMC (e.g. Corney, De Vel, Anderson, & Mohay, 2002; Herring & Martinson, 2004; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). The current study, however, used an approach from a perspective that certain groups (e.g. women) have been prescribed and socialized to use female-preferential language, and that they represent a non-dominant, muted, group in society. Given that female-preferential language does not receive as high deference as male-preferential language (O'Barr & Atkins, 1998), it follows that the users of female-preferential language are given less credence regardless of the content of their language. This unique perspective has yet to be applied to the organizational CMC literature despite the findings of gendered social cues within organizational CMC.

The growth of electronic communication in organizations has increasingly limited communication to the characters which can be composed on a standard keyboard. Although many social cues are present, some *avenues* of communication (e.g. body language) cannot be recreated strictly through text. Nonverbal communication has been found to account for up to 93% of communication within an interaction (Mehrabian, 1972) and individuals who utilize feminine forms of communication (e.g. female-preferential language) typically use more nonverbal communication to deliver their message (Briton & Hall, 1995). Thus, organizational CMC for those individuals involves the articulation of a thought or idea, through a prescribed speech pattern within a language formed by the dominant group, utilizing a standard keyboard through which to display verbal and as many nonverbal forms of communication as possible. This is a

form of muting that has yet to be fully researched or realized within any of the aforementioned fields, let alone the HRD field, specifically.

Although HRD professionals are adopting many new ways to administer and carry out their initiatives in online environments, the CMC research within the HRD field has yet to critically examine the conveyed social presence, and outcomes of that presence, within online initiatives. For example, a search for "computer-mediated communication" within the four journals sponsored by the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) resulted in only 12 articles. This limited focus on CMC within HRD research coincides with the findings of one of the 12 articles which reviewed technology-related issues within HRD publications and found that the majority of the limited research focuses on introducing educational technology (Githens, Dirani, Gitonga, & Teng, 2008). With the minimal concentration on CMC within the HRD field, and with that concentration's main focus on learning and training initiatives, the field is in need of a critical look at organizational CMC and how it may be privileging dominant groups. Moreover, it follows that HRD initiatives developed *within* CMC (i.e. development, not just delivery) are also privileging dominant groups. As organizations look more and more to online communication technologies to facilitate their strategic objectives, HRD professionals have reacted by providing more and more learning and performance initiatives online without taking a critical look at whose interests are being served and/or compromised by this cost-saving, expeditious, and convenient jump to computer-mediated communication. This study begins to address that lack of attention

by uncovering whether muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication.

Muting the portion the workforce who uses female-preferential language limits organizational communication to valuing solely the dominant, hegemonic, language use (male-preferential) and the content and outcomes of that language. There are many questions that HRD professionals are significantly overlooking as it concerns organizational CMC. For example, what, if any, alternative forms of organizational CMC are being muted (implications for memos, email, chat, forums, blogs, etc.)? Additionally, is the current (dominant) form of organizational communication the most efficient and/or effective way to exchange information and ideas? Further, would organizational goals be better served by recognizing and challenging the muteness of non-dominant groups of employees? This study provides some insight for the first question and lays the groundwork for the field to start thinking about (and researching) the other questions.

Organizations must efficiently and effectively prosper economically in order to survive in this fast-paced, competitive corporate environment upon which the Western world has thrived. Organizations that start with feminist ideals and egalitarian goals have often either given way to bureaucracy, similar to dominant group hierarchies, or have failed (Riger, 1994). Indeed, "in order to change work life, the negative outcomes of male bias and hierarchy must be compared with the economic ideals of efficiency… This is how more gender-egalitarian forms of organization are gradually winning ground; they work better" (Holter, 1997, p.172). Research in HRD must therefore seek

to improve processes, efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately organizational performance through emancipation. As Holter (1997) states, "one cannot simply compete and win against capitalist patriarchal forms of organization unless patriarchy itself is addressed" (p.173).

Definitions

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) – Text-based interactions through the medium of a computer (Walther, 1996). These interactions may be temporally asynchronous (e.g. email and discussion forums) or synchronous (e.g. instant messages and chat rooms).

Critical Research Perspective – Contests assumed truths and accepted processes and structures to reveal how they serve the interests of particular individuals or groups. "[A]ims to create a disjuncture between organizational members and the dominant interpretation of the events in their lives… It aims to undermine the veneer of a stable reality that organizational members take for granted" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 225)

Discussion Forum – asynchronous online message boards grouped by topic.

Gender-Preferential Language – "linguistic variables that in one setting or another make between-group distinctions (Fitzpatrick et al., 1995, p. 19)" of men and women. These variables are gender-preferential rather than sex-exclusive because both sexes vary in their usage of male- and/or female-preferential use.

Sex vs. Gender – "'Sex' is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in

procreative function. ‘Gender’ however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (Oakley, 1972, p. 16). Although females typically utilize female-preferential language and males typically use male-preferential language, this is largely due to the socialization of language differences and both sexes may vary in their gender-preferential language use depending upon interaction and/or context.

Muting – a condition of language structures unrecognizable due to the dominant language structure. Evidenced by the inability of non-dominant groups to ‘articulately’ express themselves due to using a language derived from dominant group experiences and perspectives rather than their own (Orbe, 1996).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this feminist critical discourse analysis is to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Utilizing muted group theory, and co-cultural communication theory, this study takes a critical look at how female-preferential language, a prescribed form of language use for women, and male-preferential language, a prescribed form of language use for men, interact within organizational computer-mediated communication (CMC).

As mentioned, this study has an overarching epistemological purpose grounded in the critical research paradigm. The diverse connotations, meanings, and understandings of critical research are themselves illustrative of their goal to challenge knowledge, beliefs, and ideologies in all forms. Indeed, many discussions of the critical paradigm provide a variety of understandings as to its nature and classification (e.g. Carr, 2000; Fraser, 1985; Held, 1980; Kinchloe & McLaren, 2005), yet none delineate a dominant definition or set a parameter of distinct beliefs. For example, Carr (2000) suggests that critical theory is often thought of as both a school of thought as well as a self-conscious critique intended to incite change and emancipation, but that it "does not cling dogmatically to its own doctrinal assumptions" (p. 208). In this light, critical theory is often utilized as an epistemological guide leading researchers down their own path of enlightenment and understanding. It is with this perspective that the current

study is approached. The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the critical research paradigm and how critical research has studied sex and gender (e.g. feminist theory). Following that overview is a review of research focusing on CMC and gender-preferential language. The chapter then provides backgrounds on muted group and co-cultural communication theories, and concludes with an explanation of how muted group and co-cultural communication theories inform research on gender and CMC.

Critical Research and Gender

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (widely known as the Frankfurt School) is largely credited with the rise of critical theory in the 1930s (Held, 1980). Key individuals from this school include Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and, at a later date, Jurgen Habermas. Horkheimer, specifically, is credited with the term *critical theory* after his 1937 essay distinguishing between traditional and critical theories. According to Horkheimer, traditional theory is concerned with deriving explanations and generalizations of the world; thus maintaining the goal from the natural sciences (to explain and predict phenomena) within the social sciences. Horkheimer argues that applying natural science ideologies to social science presents a problem because social sciences study human *experiences*. As Carr (2000) confirms, within social science research, "the researcher both is part of what they are researching, and is caught in a historical context in which ideologies shape the thinking... thus theory would be conforming to the ideas in the mind of the researcher rather than the experience itself" (pp. 209-210). Hence, the *facts* which researchers empirically perceive through their senses are socially shaped through both

the historical character of the perceived object and through their own perspective (Horkheimer, 1972). Thus, *reality* to critical researchers is not an absolute truth, but is specific to individual social actors, including researchers themselves. Extending from this view is the belief that knowledge is similarly socially constructed and "takes form in the eyes of the knower, rather than being acquired from an existing reality that resides 'out there'" (Kilgore, 2001, p. 53).

Operating under these notions of reality, knowledge, and truth, critical researchers examine the status quo and challenge assumed truths to reveal how they may serve the interests of particular individuals or groups. Recognizing the state of oppression some groups endure leads to the ultimate goal of emancipation for those groups. Women represent one such oppressed group who has been researched consistently by critical scholars over the years. Feminist theories grew from this research as the social, organizational, and political status quo was critiqued for privileging masculinity. The current study resides within this general scope of feminism as an epistemological guide within critical theory. Debate amongst feminist theories regarding what constitutes *gender* and the inclusiveness of issues other than *women's issues* abound (Calas & Smircich, 1996), but will not be discussed here.

Critical and feminist researchers have explored gender in a variety of ways. For example, Fraser (1985) examines Jurgen Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (which details critical social theory) through a feminist lens; this serves both as an example of the critical inspection of text as knowledge *and* as an example of how even critical claims of knowledge are critiqued and questioned. Fraser argues that Habermas'

contention that societies must reproduce themselves both materially (i.e. regulate and thrive within the physical environment) and symbolically (i.e. maintain culture and traditions through socialization of the young) privileges men in capitalist societies because material reproduction includes activities of paid work (traditionally a male role), whereas symbolic reproduction includes child-rearing (traditionally a female role). Thus, in a capitalist society, where production and distribution are driven by profit, the group of individuals expected to forge the material reproduction of society (men) wields more power than those expected to forge the symbolic reproduction of society (women). Much feminist research has focused on this segregation of men to the public (work life) sphere and women to the private (home life) sphere and how these traditional gender roles serve to marginalize women (Martin, 1994). It follows, then, that organizational life remains highly masculine despite the influx of women into industry since the early 1940s.

Höpfl (2002) provides a unique Jungian approach to analyzing organizational life in terms of masculinity and femininity. She argues that feminine absolution from organizations is the result of a (masculine) need to continuously and endlessly improve. This organizational quest for quality improvement comes from an assumption of insufficiency (which will never be alleviated) and subsumes all areas of organizational life, thus creating a totalizing discourse for *quality management*, *culture change* or a variety of other catch phrases in the ongoing pursuit of organizational improvement. Höpfl (2002) identifies this quest as the search for *sterile perfection*, "which Jung identifies as the hallmark of patriarchal consciousness" (p. 17). Unlike broader society,

which relegates femininity to areas of private life (e.g. child-rearing); many work organizations offer *no* space for femininity. As Höpfl describes:

> The totalizing discourses of the organization are totalizing precisely because they can never offer completion. They need to be totalizing so as to preclude the possibility of otherness. Therefore, they seek to exclude and, more precisely, they seek to exclude the possibility of the feminine. This is because the feminine, the anima, threatens to disrupt the discipline and sterility of the patriarchal logos… this is one reason why organizations, as collective expressions of one-dimensional masculinity, have been keen to turn real women into homologues of men. (p. 17)

Examples of feminine exclusion within organizations include the masculine structure of jobs (Martin, 1994), structural and behavioral organizational barriers (Lien, 2005), the masculine structure of performance evaluations (Heilman, 2001), masculine bias and hierarchy of positions (Holter, 1997), interactions of organizational, job, and individual characteristics leading to male/female wage disparity (Anderson & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1995), negative female stereotypes (Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Heilman, 2001), and the overlap between promotional/tenure clocks with biological clocks (Martin, 1994). The result of this exclusion is the ongoing process of masculine dominance operating to omit femininity within the workplace, rendering it mute. Within the scope of this study, muteness refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language structure.

Muting of female-preferential individuals in organizations, namely, women, has been studied from a variety of different angles. For example, Fletcher and Watson (2007) found that organizational context and community context jointly form a structure of muteness for some groups that ultimately evolves into the status quo. As they state, "people's perceptions and values are shaped so that they come to see the social and political order as natural or generally beneficial and therefore unchallengeable" (p. 169). That is, without critical reflection and critique, muted groups likely do not recognize their muteness.

On the other hand, non-dominant group members may be aware of their muteness by consistently and consciously recognizing their struggle to articulate their experiences within the dominant language. Lewis and Simon (1986) describe their experience in a graduate seminar where the language of academic dialogue encouraged the muting of individuals utilizing female-preferential language. Similarly, Rich (1979) states, "Listen to a woman groping for language in which to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language, trying to cut down her thought to the dimension of a discourse not intended for her" (p. 243-244).

This discussion has served to give an overview of critical research, followed by ways in which critical and feminist researchers have studied the gendered structure of organizations. A look at the ways that muting is approached within organizational gender studies concluded this section. The next section provides a discussion of computer-mediated communication and gender-preferential language.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has boomed since the 1980s. This form of communication can be temporally asynchronous (e.g. discussion forums, blogs, and email) or synchronous (e.g. instant messages and chats). CMC has been heralded as a status equalizer because it "provides fewer cues than FTF [face-to-face] communication about interactions, physical context or social roles... [And,] as this fosters status equalization, there is less awareness of group members' expertise, organizational niche and power, or ascribed characteristics" (Garton & Wellman, 1995, p. 434). Garton and Wellman (1995) go on to say that CMC "does not supply nonverbal *interactional cues* between group members, such as eye contact, gestures, nodding approval, frowning or hesitating before replying... there are no *contextual cues*" (p. 8, emphasis in original). From an information richness perspective, then, this form of communication initially seems extremely lean. Information richness critiques communication on how quickly feedback is given, the ability to take in a lot of cues, the ability to personalize, and the ability to provide language variety (Markus, 1994). Traditional classification of communication media from this perspective, in order from most to least rich, is: 1) face-to-face, 2) telephone, 3) personal documents, 4) impersonal written documents, and 5) numeric documents (Panteli, 2002). As an asynchronous written form of communication that provides faster feedback than traditional paper communication, researchers originally situated CMC someplace after the telephone, but before numeric documents (Huber & Daft, 1987; Markus, 1994).

Backlash to this placement has been abundant (e.g. Kock, 2004; Lo, 2008). Lee (1994) argues that the main premise of information richness theory (communication richness as an *inherent* characteristic of its medium) is incorrect. By analyzing managerial emails, he finds that richness is an emergent property of the communication interaction within the larger organizational context, rather than within the communication medium. Panteli (2002) extends the notion of organizational context through analyzing the text-based attributes of organizational CMC. She finds that the structure of email tends to *signal*, not alleviate, hierarchical and status differences between sender and receiver.

Finally, although not mentioning CMC specifically, Cooren (2004) goes beyond the perspective of text richness and argues that text *actively* contributes to organizational meaning. He suggests that "by focusing on textual performance, we challenge our overreliance on face-to-face interaction and show that texts contribute to the local *translocation* of constraints and abilities" (Cooren, 2004, p. 374). In other words, text, having agency, enables or constrains individuals' actions. This notion, while acknowledging human composition, challenges the perspective that text itself is simply a byproduct of human agency.

CMC and Gender-Preferential Language

Studies on gendered language differences are plentiful and span a wide variety of perspectives. Many studies analyze language according to the biological sex of the sender and receiver, thus resulting in nomenclature that categorizes men and women as using either male- or female-preferential language. For example, women tend to

demonstrate relational preservation, utilizing words and phrases of emotion, feeling, and rapport building within their language styles. Men, on the other hand, typically use language to represent facts or opinions, engage in combative dialogue and debate, and as a tool to solve problems (Fitzpatrick, et al., 1995; Janssen & Murachver, 2004; Mulac, et al., 2001; Tannen, 1990). These tendencies are primarily the result of gender socialization (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Leaper & Friedman, 2007) starting not long after children gain language proficiency (Staley, 1982).

This perspective is interesting when applied to CMC. Herring (2003) reviews the research done on gender and the internet between 1989 and 2002. Regarding asynchronous CMC, and consistent with gender-preferential language findings Herring (2003) states:

> Gender is often visible on the internet on the basis of features of participant's discourse style – features which the individual may not be consciously aware of or able to change easily... That is, users 'give off' information about their gender unconsciously in interaction... and this information does not depend in any crucial way on visual or auditory channels of communication; text alone is sufficient. (p. 207)

In conjunction with this finding, Colley and Todd (2002) found that women discussed more relational content with an emphasis on maintaining rapport within emails (to friends), whereas men more or less reported daily events. This is consistent with gender-preferential language research that suggests women's goals in communication

are to maintain relationships, while men's goals are to factually represent events (Tannen, 1999).

Janssen and Murachver (2004) not only looked at the sex of participants in textual communication, but also the psychological role of gender. Although psychological measures of gender show a greater effect of gendered language use, the *topic* of communication was the most influential in eliciting male- or female-preferential language. For example, the topic of genetic engineering drew male-preferential language from both men and women; yet the topic of discussing one's ideal romantic partner elicited more female-preferential language. This finding shows the ability of both sexes to utilize male- *and* female-preferential language. Janssen and Murachver (2004) note, however, that by restricting the topic of communication in their study, they created a forced context which may not be representative in most everyday communications. As they state, "in most contexts where gender differences are found in written communication, individuals have usually had some choice concerning what they are discussing... [And] when unrestricted by contextual elements, gender is prominent in styles of communication" (p. 361).

Men's and women's adaptability in language style is well-documented. Fitzpatrick, et al. (1995) studied gender-preferential language as a subtle nuance dependent upon the context and actors within the context. They found that both men and women adapt their speech patterns given certain situations. Conversations between the same sex elicited female- or male-preferential language, respectively, and mixed-sex dialogue showed men and women assimilating to the opposite sex's preferential

language use. However, men were found to have more difficulty adjusting to female-preferential language than women had adjusting to male-preferential language. This effect was even more apparent the more traditional, or sex-typed, the male was. In general, "men, especially traditional ones, have trouble adopting the female-preferential style when speaking to other women... Women do not have this difficulty, in that they appear capable of converging toward the male style and are able to adjust during conversation to the particular stance of a given partner" (Fitzpatrick et al., 1995, p. 35). This finding is consistent with the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories (discussed below) which argue that women start assimilating their speech patterns to accommodate dominant groups in childhood. Furthermore, it is not surprising that men, especially traditional sex-typed men, find it difficult to embrace female-preferential language when one considers how normative male-preferential language is within patriarchal contexts. That is, being socialized to use the dominant style of language, which is the preferred and privileged style within societal structures, leaves few experiences in adapting language style.

The discussion above provides an overview of gender dominant and non-dominant language styles. It is important to note that, although these studies show the fluidity of preferential language, they also essentialize men and women (as sexes) for using either male-preferential or female-preferential languages, respectively. This is based on the notion of gender socialization: Men are socialized to speak with authority, express their opinions, and challenge opposing arguments (all of which are representative of male-preferential language); and women are socialized to maintain

relationships, establish rapport and, for all intents and purposes, maintain the status quo (all of which are representative of female-preferential language). Within CMC, this prescribed way of communicating enables individuals using male-preferential language to maintain their dominance while individuals socialized in non-dominant language (e.g. female-preferential) serve to support this dominance. As a way to refrain from essentializing women as the users of female-preferential language and men as the users of male-preferential language, this study does not gather demographic data related to participant sex. Rather, the text, itself, is representative of male- or female-preferential language, and the participant interpretations of language style inform their interactions with other participants in the discussion forums. However, this study does not ignore the socialization of women and men as the primary users of female- and male-preferential languages, respectively (Leaper & Robnett, 2011). Rather, it recognizes the possibility for various users of preferential language who do not adhere to the dichotomous categories of *man* and *woman*. For example, female-preferential language, although socially ascribed to women, may also be used by men, transgendered and/or intersexed individuals in varying intensities and situations.

In sum, CMC was originally thought to equalize power and hierarchy differences between dominant and non-dominant groups due to an absence of social cues. However, research now shows that social cues are, indeed, present. Where gender cues are concerned, both sexes are able to decipher gender within CMC. This suggests that, similar to spoken language, CMC exhibits similar power and privilege characteristics as face-to-face communication. These characteristics, and the consequences of them, have

not been fully explored within the CMC literature. A review of muted group, and co-cultural communication, theories follows.

Muted Group Theory and Co-Cultural Communication Theory

Muted group theory was introduced by Edwin Ardener in the 1970s. As an anthropologist, Ardener noticed the lack of female participants not only in *his* field studies, but within the anthropological field as a whole. He presented two reasons for why researchers overlook women in anthropological studies: 1) Their lack of accessibility and interview skills, and 2) validity in researchers' analysis of transcripts (Ardener, 1975a,b). The first reason suggests a difficulty in accessing women for participation and, if reached, their tendency to be *inarticulate*[1]. The second explanation suggests that when women are accessible to participate in a study *and* express themselves in a (researcher-deemed) articulate manner, their language mimics men's language in style and form. According to Ardener, this similarity suggests female assimilation to male speech patterns. Additionally, he suggests that researchers naturally seek out male participants more so than female participants due to men's ability to be more articulate, thus limiting female involvement.

Muted group theory rests on the premise that women and men experience different realities as a result of power differences in society (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). While men are involved in shaping the dominant political and structural positions in society, women experience exclusion from these activities and positions. For women to function in society, they must assimilate to masculine norms and operate

[1] The use of inarticulate as a description of women's speech is used here as it is referenced in Ardener's (1975a,b) works.

within the prescriptions for their roles and status as women. The formation and use of language is no exception to these realities. Women's voice is thus rendered mute as they struggle to communicate through a language which does not accommodate their lived experiences.

Muted group theory operates upon three main assumptions. First, different social groups in a given society experience reality in uniquely different ways. This means that groups, as a result of their shared characteristic(s), have distinct experiences that lead to similar and collective realities which are unique to that group. Second, some groups are afforded privilege and power over others. This assumption supports the notion of hegemony, which is defined here as "noncoercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests" (Mumby, 1997, p. 344). Third, non-dominant groups assimilate their communication to how the dominant group prescribes them to communicate (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004; Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). That is, non-dominant groups not only utilize the language system of dominant groups, but they use their prescribed form of language within that system.

Spender (1998) extends muted group theory while focusing solely on women as a muted group. He suggests that women choose between alienation and silence as they are unable to express their experiences within the dominant language. Alienation involves the internalization of the dominant language, embedding its patterns, rules, and norms into one's own (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). This allows women to interact and

effectively communicate with the dominant group while, at the same time, denying development and use of language representative of their lived experience. Silence, on the other hand, is the act of not speaking. This notion of silence is not a *conscious* refusal to assimilate, but rather the inability to express one's voice through a language that does not provide for it. This form of silence is different from positive silences such as healthy, resistant, and/or self-discovery silences which are chosen and embraced (Houston & Kramarae, 1991). Rather, Spender (1990) isolates those experiences from the covert and coerced silence women regularly experience.

Additional research using muted group theory suggests that subordinate groups may choose to engage in forms of resistance to muteness (Meares et al., 2004; Houston & Kramarae, 1991). For example, women have resisted silence by celebrating discourse considered trivial by dominant group standards (e.g. casual conversations, advertisements, and various other communicative media), creating names and words for missing/unnamed issues (e.g. "sexual harassment" is a concept that is centuries old, but the term was coined just a few decades ago), organizing support groups, and by engaging in discourse recognizing their muteness (Houston & Kramarae, 1991). Despite these efforts, however, they are rarely accepted within dominant, mainstream, communication media (Houston & Kramarae, 1991). Indeed, as Houston and Kramarae (1991) state, "this [resistance] will obviously be a protracted struggle, because the changes must be momentous, transformative, not merely cosmetic, if we are to develop a language appropriate for living" (p. 398).

Orbe (1996) draws upon muted group theory in formulating co-cultural communication theory. He delineates communication strategies which non-dominant groups utilize during interactions with members of dominant groups. Rather than using the term *non-dominant*, however, he refers to these groups as *co-cultures* so as not to maintain negative or inferior connotations. However, within the body of this text, *non-dominant* is the preferred term so as to highlight the power differences and inequalities within social structures (e.g. language systems) that muted groups live within. It is believed that overt recognition of these hierarchies will initiate a deeper transformation for equality than will a change in terminology.

Orbe's interests lie in understanding how non-dominant groups describe their interactions with individuals of the dominant group. Orbe seeks to recognize the various *strategies* used by non-dominant group members during interactions with dominant group members. As such, he presents a set of communication strategies by non-dominant group members regarding their experiences interacting with dominant group members.

When non-dominant group members interact with dominant group members, feelings of fear, silence, discomfort, caution, and stifle arise (Orbe, 1996). Strategies for functioning within these situations include: 1) avoidance, 2) idealized communication (emphasizing similarities between groups), 3) mirroring, 4) respectful communication (stroking the ideals of the dominant group), 5) self-censorship, 6) extensive preparation, 7) countering stereotypes, 8) manipulating stereotypes, 9) self-assured communication, 10) increased visibility, 11) utilization of liaisons, and 12) confrontational tactics (Orbe,

1996). Based on these strategies and interactions, Orbe posits that non-dominant group members prefer one of three outcomes when communicating with the dominant group (assimilation, accommodation, or separation) and utilize one of three communication approaches (aggressive, assertive, or nonassertive) in order to reach their desired outcome. Using these approaches and preferences, Orbe constructs a framework of strategies (as below seen in Table 1):

Table 1 Co-cultural communication strategies

	Separation	Accommodation	Assimilation
Nonassertive	Avoidance	Increased Visibility Countering Stereotypes	Idealized Communication Respectful Communication Self-censorship
Assertive	Self-assured Communication	Self-assured Communication Utilization of Liaisons	Extensive Preparation Manipulating Stereotypes
Aggressive		Confrontational Tactics	Mirroring

Adapted from: Orbe, M. P. (1996). Laying the foundation for co-cultural communication theory: An inductive approach to studying 'non-dominant' communication strategies and the factors that influence them. *Communication Studies, 47*(3), 157-176.

Together, muted group theory and co-cultural communication theory suggest: 1) the existence of muting non-dominant groups, and 2) ways in which those groups work,

on a daily basis, to function and communicate effectively within a system of domination. Both theories were built and researched according to *spoken* language and interaction between dominant and non-dominant groups. The current study applies their foundational claims to organizational CMC in an effort to uncover whether *written* language serves to mute non-dominant groups. It is important to note that although women, as a group, are the primary users of female-preferential language (Leaper & Robnett, 2011), the ability to engage in either male- or female-preferential language is fluid and may be interchangeably displayed by men, women, transgendered and/or intersexed individuals in varying intensities and situations. This study makes no assumptions as to the demographics of the individuals utilizing female-preferential language within CMC, yet does not ignore the system of gender socialization in conjunction with language use. The focus of this study is to demonstrate whether *any* individual using female-preferential language within organizational CMC may be muted. To focus upon any one group (e.g. women) would essentialize and stereotype that group while excluding users that do not fit into their demographic. As discussed, gender is a *social* classification of masculinity and femininity which is not exclusive according to biological sex.

Muting within Organizational CMC

As mentioned, critical researchers have studied various ways in which feminine voice is excluded from organizational life. Operating within muted group and co-cultural communication theories, one of these ways is the language used within organizational communication. Organizational communication, more so than casual

communication, tends to privilege masculinity and, by consequence, masculine language (Höpfl, 2002).

Additionally, computer-mediated organizational communication has increasingly become the standard by which to relay information and conduct day to day business (with email remaining the most prevalent; Dabbish & Kraut, 2006). Computer-mediated communication, although originally thought to equalize gender power differences by eliminating social cues, is now recognized as displaying gender-preferential language. Given the pronounced preference toward masculinity in the workplace, it follows that organizational CMC continues to reinforce hegemonic processes and structures that values what, and who, is male-preferential over female-preferential at an exaggerated level. The current study seeks evidence of this reinforcement to determine whether muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication.

Utilizing muted group theory and co-cultural communication theory, this study investigates whether muting occurs within organizational CMC. Both of these theories argue that language is structured and developed by dominant groups, thus prescribing non-dominant groups to communicate within a specific form of the dominant language. As a result, non-dominant groups are mute because of the structure and processes of dominance within social systems. While both of these theories have been used to research spoken, face-to-face social interactions (e.g. Abdel-Monem, et al., 2010; Bowes & Domokos, 1996; Burnett, et al., 2009), to date, they have not been used for research on written computer-mediated communication within the highly masculine environments

of organizations. Although an implicit assumption of the theories is that non-dominant groups are mute regardless of the communication medium, this study seeks evidence of that assumption within organizational online written text. Therefore, this study extends muted group theory by addressing whether muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

As discussed in the previous chapter, the broad, epistemological, purpose of this study is rooted in the critical research paradigm which "aims to produce a particular form of knowledge that seeks to realize an emancipatory interest …" (Carr, 2000, p. 209). This is achieved through the current study's specific purpose to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication.

In conjunction with the purpose, the following research questions guided this study: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and, if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language. Two sub-questions helped to inform the study: 1) What male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? Qualitative research methods were employed to answer these questions. As a qualitative research study, the research questions were malleable to the ongoing findings. That is to say, although they guided the research methods, they were also re-shaped and refined as findings emerged.

In general, qualitative researchers hold beliefs about truth and reality which are consistent with the notions of the critical research paradigm discussed within the previous chapter. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define research ventures that utilize qualitative methodologies:

> [They are] a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (p. 3)

That is, qualitative researchers seek to make meaning from phenomena as they naturally occur. As such, researchers attempt to allow the data to speak for itself with unrestricted options for interpretation. Indeed, "the open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrellalike paradigm over the entire project" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. xv). Furthermore, qualitative methods may be chosen over quantitative methods within the social sciences:

> because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple… realities; because such methods expose more directly the nature of the transaction between investigator and respondent (or object) and hence make easier an assessment of the extent to which the phenomenon is described in terms of (is biased by) the investigator's own posture; and because qualitative methods are more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40)

The current study aims to uncover whether and how muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication as muted group and co-cultural communication theories argue it occurs during spoken language. To address this purpose, organizational discussion forums were analyzed absent of researcher-participant interaction. In order to uncover strategies of dominant and non-dominant communication in online organizational CMC (i.e., critically examine the gendered context and linguistics within organizational CMC), qualitative methods were employed. Utilizing these methods, qualitative researchers use "him- or herself… as the primary data-gathering instruments… because it would be virtually impossible to devise apriori a nonhuman instrument with sufficient adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.39). That is, rather than using a quantitatively-determined 'valid' and 'reliable' data collection and analysis instrument, qualitative researchers, themselves, are the instrument. As Carr (2000) confirms, within social science research, "the researcher both is part of what they are researching, and is caught in a historical context in which ideologies shape the thinking... thus theory would be conforming to the ideas in the mind of the researcher rather than the experience itself" (pp. 209-210).

Qualitative research operates within a context of eight historical moments including what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to as the *fractured future* which "asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, *gender* [emphasis added], class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (p. 3). It is within this context of qualitative research that this study

takes aim. Specifically, this study addresses organizational CMC from a feminist perspective.

Feminist research encompasses a wide variety of perspectives and approaches. As Olesen (2005) states, "feminism and feminist qualitative research remain highly diversified, enormously dynamic, and thoroughly challenging" (p. 235). Generally, however, and consistent with this study, "feminist qualitative researchers continue to worry about the question of voice and the nature of the account… this concern goes back to the earliest beginnings of feminist research… to find and express women's voices" (Olesen, 2005, p. 252). However, the nature of qualitative research allows *researchers* to make interpretations through their own experiential lens. That is, although qualitative researchers aim to let data speak for themselves, it is ultimately the researchers who make the interpretations and writes the narrative. Olesen (2005) describes this dilemma by stating, "how to make women's voices heard without exploiting or distorting those voices is also a vexatious question… even though researchers and participants both shape the flow of silences and comments, the researcher, who writes up the account and has responsibility for the text, remains in the more powerful position" (Olesen, 2005, pp. 252-253). It falls upon qualitative researchers, then, to provide thick descriptions of the research context, including their own positionality as it relates to interpretation of the data. This thick description gives readers a vivid depiction of the research site(s), the participants, and the lens through which data was analyzed.

The current study specifically employed feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as its methodology. Feminist CDA furthers the goals of critical research to

"advance a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order" (Lazar, 2005, p. 1). Moreover, FCDA is itself, a form of *analytical resistance* (van Dijk, 1991) to the social structures (e.g. language) that reinforce patriarchal hegemony. To review, hegemony is defined here as "noncoercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests" (Mumby, 1997, p. 344). As van Dijk states, "by analyzing the mechanisms of the discourses of power that reproduce and legitimate the many forms of inequality we may be expected to contribute our share to the struggles of resistance and change" (p.2).

To better understand *feminist* CDA, a brief overview of CDA is necessary. Critical discourse analysis is a methodology that "primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). That is, CDA challenges and critiques the hegemonic ideologies that are normative within a social system (such as language). As a methodological objective, CDA "aims to offer a different 'mode' or 'perspective' of theorizing, analysis, and application..." (van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). Studies utilizing CDA serve to 'denaturalize' ideological-discursive formations (Fairclough, 1995). That is, CDA studies bring to the foreground issues of power or dominance within seemingly neutral discursive structures.

Critical discourse analysis is a methodology, not a strict set of *methods*. As such "there are many types of CDA… most kinds of CDA will ask questions about the way

specific discourse structures are deployed in the reproduction of social dominance..." (van Dijk, 2003, pp. 353-354). The current study employs qualitative textual analyses utilizing the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories to determine themes of dominance and communication between male- and female-preferential languages. Fairclough (1995) describes the benefit of textual analysis when stating that "a detailed textual analysis will always strengthen discourse analysis... systematic and detailed textual analysis can add to a variety of current approaches to discourse analysis…" (p. 187). Van Dijk (2003) reiterates this sentiment by stating:

> Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the microlevel of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macrolevel of analysis. This means that CDA has to theoretically bridge the well-known 'gap' between micro and macro approaches…" (p. 354).

The current study holds sentence structure, syntax, and grammar and word selection, analyzed through determination of participants' preferential language, at the micro-level of analysis. At the macro-level of analysis, the interactions between male- and female-preferential language users are analyzed in an effort to determine power structures and dominance within organizational CMC. Lazar (2005, 2007) suggests that feminist studies employing critical discourse analysis be specified as *feminist* critical discourse analysis studies in order to highlight the gendered (i.e. masculine and feminine) and/or sexual (i.e. males and females) structures being analyzed.

Feminist CDA aims "to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar, 2007, p. 142). Five interrelated principles of feminist CDA studies include: 1) a representational form of analytical activism; 2) promulgation of gender as an ideological structure which hierarchically divides individuals into one of two classes, 3) recognition and highlighting of the complexity of gender and power relations, 4) recognition of gender as a discursive social construction within discourse, and 5) practicing critical reflexivity (Lazar, 2007). The current study appreciates and employs all five of these principles as evidenced in the previous chapter's conceptual framework and this chapter's methodological framework.

Lastly, it should be noted that FCDA, and qualitative research, in general (such as the current study) adheres to the concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), rather than the traditional notion of rigor, in determining evidence of research quality. Research is trustworthy when it is high in credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These are preferred over the traditional (quantitative) notions of rigor in research: Internal validity, external validity (generalizability), reliability, and objectivity. The four criteria of trustworthiness, and how this study meets them, are elaborated upon at the end of this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter provides discussion on the overview of research design. Following this overview, sampling procedures and the research site context are discussed. Next, data collection methods and data analysis methods are described.

Following data collection and data analysis, a discussion of researcher positionality is provided such that readers are given full disclosure of the lens through which data was analyzed and interpreted. This chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness within qualitative research.

Research Design

This feminist critical discourse analysis addresses the research question(s) through qualitative textual analyses of voluntary professional association discussion forums. This section provides an overview of the data collection and data analysis steps to this study. Following this overview are in-depth discussions of research site context and for data collection and data analysis sections.

Prior to data collection, a review of the literature was conducted in order to determine the contributions and research gaps within critical studies on written organizational communication and in studies utilizing the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories. As previously discussed, such research gaps exist where written organizational communication and critical research using muted group and co-cultural communication theories crossover. It was determined that this study adds to the current literature. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained and data collection commenced.

Three professional organizations were selected based on male and female industry involvement and the presence of discussion forums that are visible to the public. One site was chosen within a highly male dominated industry, one within a highly female dominated industry, and one within a relatively gender neutral industry of HRD.

Within each site, six forum topics were selected based primarily on their size (number of postings) and secondarily on their relevance to HRD. In total, 246 participants contributed to 681 postings within the 18 discussion forums that were analyzed. Author demographics were not collected. This methodological decision was made because the purpose of the study was to uncover whether written organizational communication, in the absence of physical or auditory cues, mutes female–preferential voice. That is, *any* users of female-preferential voice were expected to be muted, thus making demographic information moot.

Data from the 18 discussion forums was copied and saved to password-protected Microsoft Word files. Screen names were changed to generic pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2, P3) in order to eliminate identifying information and bias during analysis. The topics were then copied to NVIVO (qualitative analysis software) where data analysis was conducted.

Data analysis was twofold. First, the data was analyzed for whether it represented male-preferential or female-preferential language based upon Thomson and Murachver's (2001) 12 gendered language dimensions, and Thomson's (2006) additional six dimensions (18 language dimensions in total). The unit of analysis in determining a participant's preferential language was the culmination of their postings across all topics. Preferential language was determined by the mean frequency of male- and female-preferential codes per 100 words. Second, using the tenets of co-cultural and muted group theories, coding guided by nine of the 12 co-cultural communication strategies was done while constantly comparing the interactions between male- and

female-preferential postings. Three of the 12 strategies, were unable to be determined within online written communication, thus limiting this portion of the analysis to the nine remaining strategies. Use of these strategies by female-preferential participants provided support for the occurrence of muting with online written communication. Where this section has provided a short overview to the process of data collection and data analysis, the remaining sections go into detail regarding site selection, site context, data collection, and data analysis.

Sampling Procedures and Research Site Context

Discussion forums were the type of organizational CMC analyzed because they are a relatively new addition to organizational CMC (in contrast to other forms of CMC such as emails and instant messages) and, as such, have received little research attention in the HRD field. Additionally, discussion forums provide interactions by and between a variety of individuals (as opposed to communication solely between two individuals as is characteristic of most emails and instant messages), allowing for data rich in dominant/non-dominant interactions.

Authors of organizational discussion posts provide a username which is displayed within each posting. Full or actual names are rarely used when starting a discussion and many authors chose to use *anonymous* as their screen name. Research in discussion forums inherently provides two forms of identity protection: 1) screen names rather than actual names are used, and 2) identifying physical characteristics are not known (Herrmann, 2007). Another element of online CMC analysis concerns the ability

to falsify physical identity through screen names and/or text communication. Communication where the only identity known is that of a screen name:

> Is composed of information rather than matter. Information spreads and diffuses; there is no law of the conservation of information. The inhabitants of this impalpable space are also diffuse, free from the body's unifying anchor. One can have, some claim, as many electronic personae as one has time and energy to create. (Donath, 1999, p. 29)

Despite this ability, however, research has shown that readers of online written communication often infer gender more from stylistic conveyances than from screen names or signatures (Thomson & Murachver, 2001).

As mentioned in the design overview, author demographics were not collected as the purpose of the study was to uncover whether or not, and how, written organizational computer-mediated communication, *in the absence of* physical and auditory cues, mutes female-preferential voice. Female-preferential voice, although socially ascribed to women, may also be used by men, transgendered and/or intersexed individuals in varying intensities and situations, thus muting anyone who communicates through female-preferential language. Equally, male-preferential voice may be used by women, transgendered and/or intersexed individuals in varying intensities and situations. It is for this reason that individual demographics, though they may influence individuals' language use, are not within the scope of this study.

Research Site Context

Although participant demographics are not within the scope of this research study, *organizational* demographics were collected in order to better inform the context of the study. Sampling from highly female- and highly male-populated industries provides data rich in participation of individuals in highly gender concentrated industries. A thick description of each site and organizational demographics are explained in conjunction with the data collection procedures below.

Mechanical engineering site. The mechanical engineering site was founded in the late 1800s and has grown to over 120,000 members in over 150 countries. They also set and maintain over 600 technical standards that are widely used across the globe. Their mission is, "to serve diverse global communities by advancing, disseminating and applying engineering knowledge for improving the quality of life; and communicating the excitement of engineering" (company name withheld, retrieved from the mechanical engineering website, 2012).

When entering the site's homepage, a white background with a blue logo box of the association's acronym is in the upper left corner. The page is divided into four columns with gray text linking to news, headlines, and up-to-date information about the association. To access the discussion forums, a *groups* tab at the top of the page must be selected, followed by *social media & online groups* link from the left hand menu. From that point *PeerLink* is selected to arrive at the discussion forum home page. This page has a dark gray background with a royal blue banner at the top. The content of the page consists of gray, black, and blue text against a white background. Several boxes of

content are available: 1) a login box for members, 2) a login assistance box, 3) a box describing PeerLink, 4) a *featured community* box that highlights one of the discussion forum areas, 5) a *just updated* box that lists the top 10 forums with the most recent postings, and 6) a *new communities* box where new forum topic communities are listed. Although membership is required to originate and reply to postings, and also to view some of the forums, many forums are available for public view through free registration as a non-member. After registering for free with a name, address, and email, one may access the community topics. Selecting a community topic leads to that topic's *community page* where, on the right side of the page, one can see a calendar, new member information (for new members and non-members who have subscribed to that community), blog links from members, and an area to create polls about the community. The left side of the page contains links to individual forums. After selecting an individual forum link, a page with white boxes of text appears with the forum's content. The top box is the original post and the box underneath it is the most recent reply. All boxes underneath the most recent reply are previous replies in chronological order from most- to least-recent. Each box lists the screen name of the poster and the date and time their reply was posted. No other information is given about the individual who posted the comment.

Nursing site. The nursing site was founded upon the goal to "empower the global community of nurses with helpful information through a single, easy- to- use web site" (company name withheld, retrieved from the nursing website, 2012). This association solely runs online and does not fund local chapters, communities, or

conferences of any kind. As such, there are no annual dues, but an individual must still register on the site and become a member in order to take advantage of some of the site's resources (e.g. discussion forums).

The site's homepage color scheme is a pale blue, sky-like, background with a pale green, textured, fabric-like, backdrop where boxes of content overlay it. A tab at the top of the page labeled *forums* leads to the discussion forums homepage. The forum homepage lists eight broad topic areas in bright green horizontal rows. Clicking on each broad topic results in a drop-down menu of second-level topics. Each of these is hyperlinked with a graphic of a manila folder to its left. After selecting a second-level topic, a hyperlinked listing of individual forums is presented in stacked rows with the screen name of the original poster directly beneath the title. Each forum topic has a graphic of a piece of notebook paper to the left and lists the forum replies, views, date, and screen name of the most recent posting to the right. Upon entering an individual forum, a table of all the postings is presented with the rows as postings and two columns listing the screen name and picture or graphic (if uploaded), and the content of the posting in chronological order beginning with the original post. To reply at the bottom of the thread, an individual must log in or register with the site.

Training and development site. The training and development site was founded in the mid-1900s and is a volunteer professional association "dedicated to workplace learning and development professionals" (company name withheld, retrieved from the training and development website, 2012). Annual dues from members in over 100 countries and 125 United States local chapters are collected. Their mission is to

"Empower professionals to develop knowledge and skills successfully" (company name withheld, retrieved from the training and development website, 2012).

Listed as *Learning Communities* on the site's homepage, once selected, there are six topic areas listed alphabetically in a blue/gray color scheme table. Upon entering a topic area, a listing of forums is provided in rows that are hyperlinked, starting with the most recent. The table's columns list the forum title, the username of the individual who started the forum, how many replies the forum has, how many views the forum has, and the date of the last posted reply. After selecting an individual forum, tabs at the top of the table allow a user to start a new forum, reply to the current forum, notify the association of inappropriate discussions, and/or conduct a word search within the forums. Participants' usernames are to the left of the text they enter. The postings are stacked vertically with the original posting at the top and replies in chronological order to their posting date underneath it. Beneath each posting (as a footer) is the date the participant registered and how many postings they've written. A person may not reply (i.e. participate) in the forum without registering with the association. However, the public may view all of the forums.

National and Industry Context. Other contextual variables at the industry and national levels for these sites merit mentioning. The forum postings spanned the time period of May 2004 to April 2011. The mechanical engineering site's forums were from May 2004 to July 2008, the nursing forum spanned the time from April 2008 to April 2011, and, finally the training and development site's forums were from October 2004 to January 2009. The variation between forums in time frames is due to forum selection by

topic, not by recent activity. That is, forum threads were searched and selected for their topic, thus some topics did not have recent postings (e.g. mechanical engineering threads). During the overall time frame of these forums, the United States economy declined as unemployment went from 5.5% to 8.9% (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Moreover, the latest education statistics show that the number of bachelor degrees were being awarded to students mostly in business fields (348,000 degrees awarded), followed by social science majors (169,000), which is followed by health science majors (120,000), and concluding with education majors (102,000; National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics). Engineering graduates have increased 8% between 2004 and 2009, business graduates have increased 12% during this time, and health science graduates have increased 63%. Education majors, on the other hand, have decreased by 5,400 graduates between 1999 and 2009.

Data Collection

As discussed, three research sites with discussion forums available for public viewing, yet interactive for members only, were selected via purposive sampling based on the sexual demographics of the organizational industry. To address the purpose and research questions, one site was selected for its relevance to the field of HRD (training and development), one site was selected within a highly male-populated industry (mechanical engineering), and the last site was selected within a highly female-populated industry (nursing site). The purpose of selecting sites within these categories was threefold: 1) to review male- and female-preferential language activity across

gender-polarized environments, 2) to determine whether muting occurs across gender-polarized environments, and 3) to provide results relevant to the field of HRD.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), engineering is the highest male-populated career field with 89.3% of the field male (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, Current Population Survey, 2009). Moreover, within the field of engineering, mechanical engineering, specifically, has the highest male concentration with 93.3% of all Mechanical Engineers being male (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Nontraditional Occupations for Women, 2010). Conversely, nursing is the highest female-populated career field with 92.0% of the field female (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, Current Population Survey, 2009). Within the HRD field, although it is not specifically listed in employment demographics, the BLS reports that *human resources, training, and labor relations* is 70.3% female (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, Current Population Survey, 2009). Given these statistics, one voluntary professional association within the field of mechanical engineering, one voluntary professional association within the field of HRD, and one voluntary professional association within the field of nursing were selected based on the presence of discussion forums available for public viewing, but interactive for members only. Thus, the criteria for site selection was: 1) must be a voluntary professional association within the field of mechanical engineering, HRD, or nursing, 2) the association website must contain discussion forums, 3) the discussion forums must have public access, and 4) the discussion forums must only allow members of the association to add and/or reply to postings within the discussion forums.

Six discussion forums from each site were selected for analysis based on HRD relevance and forum length. Examples of forum search terms for HRD relevance include 'human resources', 'career development', 'training and development,' and 'organizational development'). The minimum forum length was set at 10 postings per topic. That is, topics with less than 10 postings were eliminated from analysis. The selected text from the six discussion forums within the three sites was electronically copied from the forums and saved to a password-protected Microsoft (MS) Word document. Screen names were then replaced with generic pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2, P3) using the find/replace tool in MS Word. This step provided an additional layer of participant confidentiality. A record of screen names and their corresponding pseudonyms was stored in a password-protected MS Excel file for backup and reference. Workplace and company names and websites (if mentioned) within the text content were deleted altogether. Once the data was sufficiently blinded, it was uploaded to NVIVO (qualitative analysis software) to begin analysis. In total, 294 pages of text from the 18 discussion forums (six forums from each site) included 682 postings for data analysis.

Data Analysis

As mentioned during the research design overview, data analysis was twofold. First, the data was analyzed for whether it represented male-preferential language or female-preferential language. The unit of analysis in determining this designation was the culmination of participant postings across all discussion forums to which they contributed. The intended result of this analysis was the categorization of participants as male-preferential language users, female-preferential language users, or neutral language

users. Second, using the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theories as a guide, the interactions between male-preferential participants and female-preferential participants were analyzed for themes of male-preferential dominance and female-preferential communication strategies. These two modes of analysis are described in detail below.

Gender-Preferential Language

Thomson and Murachver (2001) distinguish 12 gendered language dimensions: References to emotion (F), requests for information (F), personal information (F), opinions (M), self-derogatory comments (F), insults (M), compliments to recipient (F), apologies (F), subordinating conjunctions (F), models or hedges (F), intensive adverbs (F), and adjectives (M). Upon later research, Thomson (2006) adds six additional gendered language features: Referring to a previous comment (F), agreeing with another's statement (F), giving a directive (M), disagreeing (M), statements emphasizing differences (M), and statements emphasizing similarities or solidarity (FP; see Appendix A for a description of all 18 preferential language codes). These 18 gendered language dimensions were used to code each of the 682 postings. Mean frequencies for each participant were calculated for their use of female-preferential and male-preferential language codes per 100 words by dividing the count of their preferential language codes by their total word count and multiplying by 100. Individuals with higher mean frequencies for female-preferential language were labeled as *female-preferential* and those with higher mean frequencies for male-preferential language were labeled as *male-*

preferential. Individuals who had equal mean frequencies for male-preferential and female-preferential language were labeled as *neutral*.

Muteness

Operating within the tenets of muted group and co-cultural communication theory, the interaction between dominant (male-preferential) and non-dominant (female-preferential) individuals was expected to result in themes of muting. Evidence of muting through a critical examination of the male-and female-preferential interactions utilizing principles of muted group and co-cultural communication theories was expected to provide themes of dominance from male-preferential (MP) participants and themes of non-dominant communication strategies from female-preferential (FP) participants. The interactions between MP and FP participants were analyzed line by line to uncover themes of dominance by MP participants, whereas FP postings within these interactions were coded according to the 12 co-cultural communication strategies that non-dominant groups use during spoken interactions with dominant groups.

Once each posting's author was designated as male-preferential, female-preferential, or neutral, it was determined whether the posting was directed to another participant or to the group at large. Postings by MP participants to FP participants and by FP participants to MP participants (i.e. any interactions between and/or directed to male- and female-preferential individuals) were pulled and organized by female-preferential participants. For example, if P163 (female-preferential) had interactions with P156, P168, and P159 (all male-preferential) and/or had postings directed to/from

these individuals (even if they went unanswered), then these postings were pulled for analysis of P163's interactions with the MP participants listed above.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Orbe (1996) articulates 12 strategies employed by non-dominant groups during their interactions with dominant groups. These strategies are: 1) avoidance, 2) idealized communication (emphasizing similarities between groups), 3) mirroring, 4) respectful communication (stroking the ideals of the dominant group), 5) self-censorship, 6) extensive preparation, 7) countering stereotypes, 8) manipulating stereotypes, 9) self-assured communication, 10) increased visibility, 11) utilization of liaisons, and 12) confrontational tactics (Orbe, 1996; see Appendix B for a description of these strategies). However, this theory derived these strategies from spoken communication and interviews, thus some strategies are not feasible in coding CMC discussion forums. Specifically, extensive preparation, countering stereotypes, and manipulating stereotypes (#6, 7, & 8 from the list above) cannot be accurately assessed without contacting forum participants; which goes beyond the scope of this study. Thus, the nine remaining strategies were used to code FP participant's postings which were directed toward, or in response to, a MP participant. Constant comparative analysis during this phase of analysis was used to draw any categories or themes not addressed by muted group or co-cultural communication theory. Constant comparative method is an inductive analysis tool which seeks to derive codes and themes from raw data (Schwandt, 2001). As analysis continues, themes and concepts emerge from the ongoing assessment of female-preferential strategy analysis. For a review of the total

data analysis steps, see Table 2 in Appendix C. Additionally, an example of coding is provided by figure 2 in Appendix D.

Researcher Positionality

Similar to most qualitative research, the data collection and analysis of this study were inseparably linked to my personal perspective as a researcher. As Carini (1975) states, "the observer is here construed as one moment of the datum and as such the fabric of his thought is inextricably woven into the datum as he is assumed to be constituent of its meaning" (p.8). Although Carini is referring to observational data collection, her notion of researcher perspective being present within the data is applicable throughout data collection and analysis for this study. Due to this linkage, researchers "not only have a responsibility to publish what we know, but how we think we know it, and where we are situated in the act of trying to understand" (Maynes & Pierce, 2005, p. 1). In order to accomplish this, a detail of researcher perspective (or 'positionality') is provided here.

Demographically, being a white female lends to analyzing data from a racially dominant, yet gender non-dominant stance. The focus of this study is on how the structure of gendered language works to mute FP language users, but it is important to note that race and ethnicity are intricately interwoven with sex and gender. Language use, in general, is shaped by many different variables. However, it is beyond the scope of the current study to explicate these relationships in terms of online, written language communication, and it is also noted that this study makes no contentions regarding how

ethnicity and race may, or may not, compound muting processes within organizational CMC. Nevertheless, it is understood that gender is not the only influence regarding language use. Colloquial terms, idioms, cultural references, and vernacular that are both familiar and unfamiliar to my personal experiences will be interpreted and presented through my experiences and perspectives as a white female.

Researcher age is another demographic variable which may affect the coding of data. Born in 1980, and being on the edge of both Generation X and Generation Y (i.e., Millennial Generation), I find myself often identifying with the ideals, traditions, and values of both generations. For example, individuals of Generation X often have mobile careers and adapt readily to change. They tend to do things on their own rather than expect teamwork or support from others (Patterson, 2007). Individuals of Generation Y are considered 'digital natives' due to a lifetime experience with technology and immediate feedback. They are considered idealistic with high expectations and little experience with failure (Patterson, 2007). It may be difficult to identify with (and subsequently, interpret) information and language used by individuals of different generations than X or Y. References to events, values, and time periods outside of my experience will ultimately be interpreted through my generational lens.

Professional experiences also contribute to researcher analysis and interpretation. I have worked in the human resources industry for six years at the time of analysis. Specifically, most of my experience has been with recruitment and selection processes and procedures, but I have also been peripherally involved in compensation analyses, employee coaching, and payroll processes. I have no background or experience in the

mechanical engineering or nursing fields. Although the topics within the discussion forums are not the focus of analysis, a general understanding of the nuances, terms, and industry culture provides a deeper insight while coding. This insight may be enhanced while coding the forums within the training and development site (an industry I am familiar with), but not as enhanced while analyzing the sites pertaining to mechanical engineering and nursing (industries I am not familiar with).

This discussion has served to provide the reader with information on researcher positionality such that readers may infer a deeper understanding into the way data was analyzed. As discussed, within qualitative research, the 'instrument' of data collection and analysis is the researcher. As such, researchers have a responsibility to their audience to acknowledge personal and professional experiences and perspectives that contribute to interpretations of the data. Next we turn to a discussion on ethical issues and conclude the chapter with a discussion on research trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Participant confidentiality is of the utmost concern utilizing human subjects during research. Research in discussion forums inherently provides two forms of identity protection: 1) screen names rather than actual and/or full names are used, and 2) identifying physical characteristics are not known (Herrmann, 2007). In order to protect individual's confidentiality further, screen names were replaced with generic pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2, P3) using the find/replace tool in MS Word. A list of pseudonyms and their corresponding screen names were kept for reference purposes within a password-protected MS Excel spreadsheet.

Trustworthiness

This section seeks to address considerations of methodological quality within research that uses qualitative methods. As discussed, critical studies seek to question taken for granted processes, systems and assumptions in everyday life. Moreover, the notions of 'reality' and 'truth' are thought to be individualized through personal histories, experiences, and perspectives. Thus, the participants, in conjunction with the researcher, are co-constructing truth from, and within, the data. In this way, critical researchers often align with naturalistic inquiry regarding assumptions about knowledge and the quality of research.

Qualitative research follows the tenets of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research is trustworthy when it is high in credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These principles of trustworthiness can be compared and contrasted with the more traditional scientific notion of rigor. Quantitative research is considered rigorous (of high quality) when it has high internal validity, external validity (generalizability), reliability, and objectivity. The discussion below highlights the four tenets of trustworthiness and explains how the current methodology ensures each of them.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with factors confounding the data which make it non-interpretable for the researcher(s). In other words, is the data accurate in the eyes of the researcher, the participant, and the reader? In order to prevent non-interpretability, researchers engage in triangulation. Triangulation is a process of checking the claims of

data interpretation through multiple means (Schwandt, 2001). This can be accomplished by using multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and/or theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) also suggests that researchers develop an early familiarity with the culture of their research site(s) in order to gain deeper understanding into their participants' realities. Within this study, triangulation was accomplished through the use of two interrelated theories (known as theoretical triangulation) and data collection and analysis from three separate sites (known as data triangulation). In comparison, quantitative research seeks internal validity as a criterion of rigor which determines if the variables (i.e. independent and dependent variables) are affected by other, confounding, variables. The design of the study through control and randomization limits the contamination of confounding variables in traditional, quantitative studies.

Transferability

Qualitative research adheres to the notion of transferability. Transferability is an embracement of contextual variations as an ever-present construction of data (Schwandt, 2001). The goal of transferability is to provide an explicit depiction of the data such that interested parties are able to determine the relevance of the results to situations of their own purpose. Thus, rather than the researcher applying the results to a specified population (as is the purpose of generalizability), transferability allows for the population to accept or reject the applicability of the results. In order to allow for this, researchers conduct purposive sampling (i.e., participants are deliberately chosen for the appropriateness to the purpose of the study) and develop thick descriptions of the context

during and after data collection. A thick description not only encompasses a detailed account of experiences and perspective, but is also the beginning of interpretation of those notions (Schwandt, 2001). Researcher positionality also provides the reader with the perspectives and experience of the researcher as he/she interprets the data. The current study utilized purposive sampling (six discussion forums within three organizations were chosen for analysis) and provides thick descriptions of the organizational sites and context to achieve transferability. Copious notes and memos were taken during data collection and analysis to develop the thick description. Additionally, researcher positionality is provided such that readers are given full disclosure of the lens through which data was analyzed and interpreted.

In contrast to transferability, external validity (generalizability), in quantitative research is concerned with the application of research results to the target population. Sampling procedures which minimize or maximize situational variations that may affect the ability to generalize the results are typically used to maintain external validity.

Dependability

Dependability seeks to produce data which are stable through researcher and research change(s). When the researcher is the instrument of both data collection and of data interpretation, dependability that the researcher is consistent in all areas of collection and analysis is imperative. Dependability is typically achieved through overlapping methods (methodological triangulation), stepwise replication (two teams of researchers conduct the study independently), and/or bringing in a third party to conduct an inquiry audit (who examines of the process and product of the study). The current

study achieved dependability through theoretical and data triangulation (discussed above). Quantitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with reliability in lieu of dependability. Reliability seeks to reduce inconsistencies due to instrumental factors. Replication of results is key in determining reliability in quantitative studies.

Confirmability

Lastly, researcher bias is ever-present, but confirmability of results aids in establishing trustworthiness for a qualitative study. Confirmability is typically established through a confirmability audit (e.g., inquiry audit) and triangulation. As mentioned, the audit is done by a third party who examines the research process and results. The researcher thus must leave an audit trail consisting of detailed notes regarding raw data, data reduction (coding) and data analysis (interpretation) (e.g. units of analysis, summary notes). Additionally, the researcher provides the auditor information on data reconstruction and synthesis products (e.g. themes), process notes (e.g. memos), and materials relating to intentions and dispositions (e.g. proposal, goals, and research questions; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The current study employs this audit trail by keeping copious notes throughout the data collection and data analysis phases and meets the steps necessary for triangulation. In contrast, the criterion of objectivity in quantitative research has the goal of reducing researcher bias. This is accomplished through limiting researcher involvement which may contaminate the data.

Utilizing these criteria for trustworthiness, this study looked at gender-preferential language for whether the dominant style (MP) serves to mute the non-dominant style (FP) within organizational CMC. The critical nature of this study serves

to critique a deeply entrenched and taken-for-granted system of language communication as it pertains to organizational life.

Conclusion

To summarize, this chapter provided an overview of qualitative research and why it was selected for this research venture. To determine whether and how muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational communication a methodology of qualitative coding and interpretation was used to uncover themes of dominance and communication strategies related to MP and FP language interactions.

This methodological design employed feminist critical discourse analysis as a guide in critiquing and interpreting data from the 18 discussion forums. The primary goal of studies using FCDA is, "to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar, 2007, p. 142).

Data was collected from three organizational sites selected by their presence of discussion forums and by their industry's polarization of gender representation. A mechanical engineering site, training and development site, and nursing site were selected. Data was analyzed according to 18 gendered language dimensions and participants were categorized as using FP, MP, or neutral language. Once these designations were made, interactions between FP participants and MP participants were analyzed for themes of FP communication strategies and MP dominance. Lastly,

dimensions of research trustworthiness and how they were met within the current study were discussed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this feminist critical discourse analysis is to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Muteness of female-preferential voice refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language structure. The existence of muteness, as defined here, is determined by the presence of strategies of dominance by male-preferential (MP) language participants, and strategies of non-dominant communication by female-preferential (FP) language participants, during interactions with each other. To review, the following research questions guided this study: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and, if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language? Two sub-questions helped to inform the study: 1) What male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? Qualitative textual analysis was employed to answer these questions. As a qualitative research study, the research questions were malleable to the ongoing findings. That is to say, although they guided the research methods, they were also re-shaped and refined as findings emerged. For example, as the coding continued, it became evident that the use of metaphors was a FP communication strategy. Thus, sub question #2 evolved from looking solely at Orbe's

(1996) 12 co-cultural communication strategies to broadening the coding in search of other possible communication strategies.

It is expected that the findings and knowledge produced from this study will bring attention to, and transformation of, the power ingrained within language structures in written organizational communication within the field of human resource development (HRD). This chapter presents key findings from 18 discussion forums (six from each of the three different industry sites discussed in the previous chapter) totaling 294 pages of text and 681 postings.

Findings

Eighteen language codes were used to analyze 294 pages of text (71 pages from the mechanical engineering site, 114 from the training and development site, and 109 from the nursing site) from the 18 discussion forums (six forums from each site). In total, there were 682 postings coded (126 in the mechanical engineering site, 261 from the training and development site, and 295 in the nursing site). The mechanical engineering site averaged 6.00 preferential language codes per 100 words, the training and development site averaged 8.00 preferential language codes per 100 words, and the nursing site averaged 6.00 preferential language codes per 100 words. Thus, the three sites were fairly equivalent in use of preferential language, with the training and development site using slightly more gender-preferential language than the nursing and mechanical engineering sites.

Mean frequencies of female-preferential language use and of male-preferential language use per participant were figured from the culmination of each participant's

postings. These were calculated by summing the instances of preferential language use, dividing by the participant's total word count, and multiplying by 100. This yielded the frequency for male-preferential language use per 100 words and female-preferential language use per 100 words per participant. Individuals who had more male-preferential instances per 100 words were categorized as *Male-Preferential* (MP) and individuals with more female-preferential instances per 100 words were categorized as *Female-Preferential* (FP). Individuals who had equal male-preferential and female-preferential instances per 100 words were categorized as *Neutral* (N).

To review, the overarching research questions for this study were: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and, if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language? Muteness of female-preferential voice refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language structure. The existence of muteness, as defined here, is determined by the presence of strategies of dominance by MP language participants, and strategies of non-dominant communication by FP language participants, during interactions with each other. Two sub-questions helped to inform these broad research questions: 1) What, if any, male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) does written female-preferential language contain co-cultural communication strategies and/or other reactions when responding to this dominance? As a qualitative research study, these questions were malleable to the ongoing findings.

The first three findings provide an overall description of preferential language usage and the interactions between male-preferential language users and female-preferential language users within the three sites' discussion forums. These findings give insight into how gender preferential language is used within online written organizational communication across industries varying in male-preferential and female-preferential participation. These findings additionally provide context and perspective through a thick description of the data. The next two findings inform the first aforementioned sub-question, and the last two findings inform the second aforementioned sub-question. Combined, the last four findings depict whether and how muting occurs between MP and FP participant interactions. By uncovering ways in which male-preferential language users establish dominance through online written communication, and determining whether FP participants employ co-cultural communication strategies and/or other communication strategies within their interactions with MP participants, it was found that online written organizational communication displays muteness of non-dominant groups (i.e. female-preferential language users) by dominant groups (i.e. male-preferential language users).

Finding #1: Preferential-Language

Of the 18 gender-preferential language characteristics, the most prevalent of the female-preferential codes were instances of modals/hedges and references to emotion (refer back to Appendix A for a description of all 18 preferential language codes). The least prevalent of the female-preferential language codes were self-derogatory comments and apologies. The most prevalent male-preferential language codes were opinions and

use of intensive adjectives. The least prevalent male-preferential language codes were insults and statements emphasizing differences. For detailed information on usage percentages of language codes, see table 3 in Appendix E. Descriptions, examples, and prevalence of each of the 18 gender-language dimensions are discussed below. Examples provided are drawn from the total references of each code and were not chosen to represent specific sites.

Female-preferential language. Female-preferential language includes 12 dimensions: Modals/hedges, reference to emotion, intensive adverbs, subordinating conjunctions, statements emphasizing similarity or solidarity, agreeing, compliments, referring to previous comments, requests for information, personal information, apologies, and self-derogatory comments. Descriptions, examples from the data, and prevalence of each of the 12 FP language dimensions are reviewed below.

Modals/hedges. As mentioned, the most prevalent female-preferential language characteristic was the utilization of modals/hedges. Modals are auxiliary verbs that combine with action verbs to designate mood or tense such as intention, obligation, or necessity. Examples of modals include: Can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, and would. Of the total modals used, the training and development site had the most instances, followed by the nursing site, and finally, the mechanical engineering site. References to modals include, "I *would* [emphasis added] think that as caring is part of the job requirements" (P58FP[2], nursing site), and "if there were better materials, you

[2] Participants were numbered in order of appearance (e.g. P1, P2, P3…) and are cited using these pseudonyms followed by an acronym designating their preferential language use. FP = female-preferential language user; MP = male-preferential language user; and N = neutral preferential language user.

could [emphasis added] make the case that they *should* [emphasis added] know what they're doing" (P1FP, training and development site). Similar to modals, hedges are linguistic devices (typically adverbs and adjectives) that serve to lessen the impact of a statement. Examples of hedges include: Somewhat, maybe, generally, probably, and perhaps. For instance, P44FP (nursing site) states, "Because a nurse is in a position of authority this doesn't give them a right to slaughter anyone verbally. I've *basically* [emphasis added] left without a sense of self worth." Another example is when P106FP (nursing site) says, "thanks to those who had the honesty and integrity to tell it like it is; hope those comments don't get deleted, mine *probably* [emphasis added] will if that's what this forum is like." Both modals and hedges lessen the impact of what follows them, thus minimizing the importance of the points being made.

Reference to emotion. The second-most utilized female-preferential language characteristic was reference to emotions. These were statements referring to one's own sentiments and personal feelings and/or references of one's own *perceptions* of sentiments and personal feelings held by another. Of the total use of these references, the nursing site contained the overwhelming majority of them, followed by the training and development site, and finally, the mechanical engineering site had the least emotional references. Examples include, "I would sit up and gleefully say" (P241FP, mechanical engineering site), "it so affected me that 20 years later as a Nurse Author I have a chapter in my book dedicated to this subject" (P59MP, nursing site), and "I have been an external consultant for 11 years – and I love it – and one of the main reasons I

love it is because I do NOT have to mess with internal politics" (P11FP, training and development site).

Intensive adverbs. Intensive adverbs were the third most prevalent female-preferential language characteristic used within the forums. Intensive adverbs seek to intensify and give emphasis to the noun it precedes (e.g. extremely, excessively). Of the total use of these references, the nursing site contained the majority of them, followed by the training and development site, and, finally, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of intensive adverbs include, "I've searched the web *extensively* [emphasis added] and have found little mentioned on incentives for SME trainers" (P1FP, training and development site), "this is *religiously* [emphasis added] followed at site" (P239FP, mechanical engineering site), and "*obviously* [emphasis added] I cant [*sic*] share openly in a forum here how nursing is a *totally* [emphasis added] destructive profession" (P105FP, nursing site).

Subordinating conjunction. The fourth-most utilized female-preferential characteristic was the use of subordinating conjunctions. Subordinating conjunctions join subordinate clauses to main clauses. Examples of common subordinating conjunctions are: After, unless, as though, maybe, even if, whenever, inasmuch, and although. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained the majority of them, followed by the nursing site, and, finally, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of subordinating conjunctions include, "and of course, I will leave to your expertise. But, I wondering if *maybe* [emphasis added] there's a bit of trying to simply get your attention" (P41FP, nursing site), "I didn't provide more detail

regarding my personal perspective because, *unless* [emphasis added] I misunderstood – this is an assignment for school. Yes" (P24FP, training and development site), and "said differently, we are a business, but being a successful business (*while* [emphasis added] a necessity) will not be sufficient to fulfill our purpose" (P245FP, mechanical engineering site).

Similarity or solidarity. The fifth most used female-preferential language code was the use statements emphasizing similarities or solidarity. Of the total use of these references, the nursing site contained the majority, followed by the training and development site, and lastly, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of statements emphasizing similarities and/or solidarity include, "I *along with several other early career engineers* [emphasis added] have been actively contributing input and suggested improvements" (P184FP, mechanical engineer site), "I think *I would have acted the same way* [emphasis added] given the situation" (P62FP, nursing site), "If I think maybe I can contribute in some way, I will. I would think that *everyone in the learning profession* [emphasis added] would feel so inclined" (P11FP, training and development site), and " *as engineers, we can appreciate* [emphasis added] that for certain processes like GTAW for example, there is little change in the other essential variables even though the A-No. is not the same" (P241FP, mechanical engineering site).

Agreeing. Agreeing with another participant's statement was the sixth most frequent of all of the female-preferential language codes. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained the most, followed by the nursing site, which was closely followed by the mechanical engineering site. Examples

of statements that agree with another participant include, “people are using the COP, but you’re right that the numbers aren’t great” (P183MP, mechanical engineering site), “exactly, [P5MP]!” (P4FP, training and development site), and:

> I agree with [P140FP] it is the wishes of our residents, family members, and staff for the resident to stay at "Home" and pass with loved ones and familiar care givers vs. the hustle and hastle [*sic*] and being transported to the ER. (P141FP, nursing site)

Compliments. The seventh most used female-preferential language characteristic was compliments to the recipient. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained the most, followed closely by the nursing site, which was similarly followed closely by the mechanical engineering site. Examples of compliments to recipients include, “thank you [P42FP] for giving the true picture of nursing practice in US” (P147FP, nursing site), “Well thought out and extremely strong argument. I wish half the people I dealt with on a daily basis were as intelligent as that post” (P223FP, mechanical engineering site), and “your response is so eloquent and to the point” (P1FP, training and development site).

Referring to a previous comment. Referring to previous comments represents the eighth most used female-preferential language code. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained the overwhelming majority of them, followed by the mechanical engineering site and, finally, the nursing site. Examples of referring to previous comments include, “to [P6MP]’s point about instructors being children, I understood him to say that like most people, their needs are

simple...” (P2MP, training and development site), “But in your second reply above, that is exactly what I don't miss about hospital nursing!” (P161FP, nursing site), and “I went back and read your earlier post and can understand your frustration” (P182FP, mechanical engineering site).

Request for information. The ninth most frequent female-preferential language code was requests for information. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained over half of them, the nursing site followed, and the mechanical engineering site contained the least of them. References to requests for information include, “any good books to recommend about making this transition?” (P9FP, training and development site), “Nursing is stressful enough without your peers trying to stab you in the back. I'd like to hear other's opinion about this” (P77FP, nursing site), “I am wondering with all the restructuring and changes that ASME is undertaking, what is the direction they are moving in?” (P182FP, mechanical engineering site), and “how can we solve this problem? How can we make this easier? How can I help?” (P24FP, training and development site).

Personal information. The tenth most frequent (third least frequent) of the female-preferential codes was personal information. Personal information encompasses the sharing of information regarding one’s private life. Of the total use of these references, the nursing site contained over half of them, followed by the training and development site, and lastly, the mechanical engineering site contained the least references. Examples of statements regarding personal information include, “[I] am not sure I can risk lack of cash flow (homeowner with large monthly bills)” (P9FP, training

and development site), “I am currently unemployed and have been pursuing methods to refine my background” (P230FP, mechanical engineering site), and “I am from NYC just out here in CA for grad school...4 more years and then I am home” (P39FP, nursing site).

Apology. Apologies are the second least frequent female-preferential code. Of the total use of these references, the training and development site contained about half of them, followed by the nursing site, and lastly, the mechanical engineering site. Example of apologies include, “...but that’s not an excuse. My apologies—won’t do it again!” (P42FP, nursing site), “I apologies [*sic*] if I have seem a little too brash” (P241FP, mechanical engineering site), and “please bear with me regarding my English language” (P27FP, training and development site).

Self-derogatory comments. Finally, the least represented of the female-preferential codes were self-derogatory comments. Self-derogatory statements are those that intentionally belittle oneself. Of the total use of these references, the nursing site contained the most of them, followed by the training and development site, and, finally, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of self-derogatory comments include, “I was dumb to fall into trusting someone else’s word in this manner” (P114FP, nursing site), “I know these are simplistic questions, but they are interesting” (P25N, training and development site), and “that summary was included in the full report prepared and given to the Board of Governors in November 2003 (I believe this is the right date—my memory is not what it once was)” (P245FP, mechanical engineering site).

Male-preferential language. Male-preferential language includes 6 dimensions: Opinions, intensive adjectives, disagreeing, giving a directive, statements emphasizing differences, and insults. Descriptions, examples from the data, and prevalence of each of the 6 MP language dimensions are reviewed below.

Opinions. The most prevalent male-preferential language use characteristic was the use of opinions. Opinions are subjective beliefs and factual interpretations based on perspective. Of the total use of opinions, the training and development site had the most references, closely followed by the nursing site, which was closely followed by the mechanical engineering site. Examples of opinions include, "sounds to me like he's not interested in employee issues" (P4FP, training and development site), "it is our profession to give care regardless of our feelings" (P141FP, nursing site), "I would wager that the majority of [Association]'s members are unaware of both the significant change in direction and the underlying reasons for the changes)" (P243MP, mechanical engineering site), and "don't look for 'cookie cutter' training, otherwise people will run from your effort screaming explatives [*sic*]" (P2MP, training and development site).

Intensive adjectives. The second most used male-preferential language characteristic was the use of intensive adjectives. Intensive adjectives serve to provide exceptional descriptive emphasis to the noun it precedes. Of the total use of intensive adjectives, the training and development site contained half of them, followed by the nursing site, and lastly, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of intensive adjectives within the data include, "thank you for your very *poignant* [emphasis added] comments" (P184MP, mechanical engineering site), "wise organizations always include

radical [emphasis added] opinions (Points of view) which they always studied to find answers to the problems of the orthodoxy" (P177, nursing site), "Recently there's been some posts expressing how trainers or training departments are handcuffed or interfered with by HR, or executives, or managers or other *powerful* [emphasis added] villains..." (P25N, training and development site), and "my time is too valuable to attempt an *all-encompassing* [emphasis added] answer" (P187FP, mechanical engineering site).

Disagreeing. Statements of disagreeing were the third most used male-preferential language code. The training and development site contained over half of these instances, followed by the nursing site, and, finally, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of this language code include, "This is absolutely wrong. Qualification on P-1 materials does not qualify welding on higher P- numbers" (P203MP, mechanical engineering site), "I also take issue with inferring that older nurses are somehow complacent" (P117MP, nursing site), and "Is it really impossible - or a matter of priorities?" (P3MP, training and development site).

Giving directives. The fourth most used male-preferential language characteristic was giving a directive. Directives intend to guide and command the intended person according to the speaker's intentions. The participants in the nursing site and in the training and development site equally used this characteristic; the mechanical engineering participants used directives the least. Examples include, "If you want reasons why it makes sense to have it this way, then *re-read this thread* [emphasis added]" (P25N, training and development site), "in general this is wrong, too--depends on the specific materials and the thicknesses qualified on the WPS. *Read it* [emphasis

added]" (P203MP, mechanical engineering site), and "I feel it ridiculous with this nursing shortage that each professional RN does not support, encourage, and help nurses with less experience; *show them the way* [emphasis added] for heavens [*sic*] sake" (P69N, nursing site).

Statements emphasizing differences. Statements emphasizing differences are the fifth most used (second least used) male-preferential language characteristic. The participants in the nursing site and in the training and development site equally used this characteristic. The mechanical engineering site had the least number of these statements. Examples of this characteristic include, "Different knowledge base, different skill set. Hard to compare apples to oranges" (P63FP, nursing site), "I'll leave the "what it is" to the folks who own it" (P31MP, training and development site), "that said, [Association] is not for everyone. We can't possibly appeal to or offer value to everyone about everything" (P245FP, mechanical engineering site), and:

> They think the newer nurses don't know how good they have it. #1 with all the new technology and responsibilities it ISN'T better, #2, Even if it was worse, even if older nurses 'ate' THEM, doesn't make it justified to continue. (P131FP, nursing site)

Insults. Lastly, the least frequent male-preferential language code was insults. Insults are comments to another participant that convey rudeness and insolence toward that participant. The training and development site contained nearly half of these instances, followed by the nursing site, and lastly, the mechanical engineering site. Examples of this characteristic include, "I suggest the first thing you should do is obtain

a copy of [Organizational Standards] and read it and then maybe you would realize how stupid your statements are" (P242MP, mechanical engineering site), "If you truly feel the way you do, then you have no chances in nursing" (P117MP, nursing site), and "Yea, that's the way to get respect. INSULT them, generalize about them, be an HR bigot, and let's really cut down the people who pay our bills" (P25FP, training and development site).

Finding #2: Participants by Preferential Language

Of the 246 individuals who participated in the 18 discussion forums, 158 utilized female-preferential language with a higher mean frequency than they used male-preferential language (designated as *Female-Preferential* language users). Sixty-six of the participants utilized male-preferential language with a higher mean frequency than they used female-preferential language (designated as *Male-Preferential* language users). Finally, 22 participants had equal mean frequencies of male- and female-preferential language (designated as *Neutral* language users). For details on the mean frequencies and the preferential language designation of all 246 participants see table 4 in Appendix F.

Of the 38 participants in the training and development site, almost two-thirds of them were female-preferential language users, with roughly one-third being male-preferential language users. There was one participant who was neutral. Within the nursing site, over two-thirds of the 143 participants were female-preferential language users, with nearly one-quarter being male-preferential language users. Roughly 10% were neutral participants. Finally, of the 65 participants in the mechanical engineering

site, slightly over one-half were female-preferential language users, with nearly one-third being male-preferential. This site had the largest percentage of neutral language participants with over 12% of the 65 participants using equal instances of male- and female-preferential language.

Finding #3: Male-Preferential/Female-Preferential Interactions

In order to address the research questions, interactions between MP participants and FP participants were pulled from the main data set and analyzed further. This section discusses the *composition* of these interactions by industry site and in total. In contrast, findings four through seven provide specific outcomes of muting within these interactions.

As mentioned, there were 158 female-preferential language users and 66 male-preferential language users in total. Of these, one-quarter of the female-preferential language users interacted with male-preferential language users and two-thirds of the male-preferential language users interacted with female-preferential language users. The higher proportion of male-preferential language users interacting with female-preferential language users is likely due to the large amount of female-preferential language users active across all sites. Thus, as a male-preferential language user seeking to contribute to a forum, there is a greater chance of responding to a female-preferential language user than to a male-preferential language user due to the disproportionate amount of FP participants in comparison to MP participants. In conjunction with this demographic, of the 18 discussion forums, 17 of them were initiated by a female-preferential participant.

There were 681 total postings across the 18 discussion forums. Of these postings, 149 of them were male-preferential/female-preferential interactions. That is, a male-preferential language user specifically addressed a female-preferential language user and/or vice versa. Of these interactions male-preferential language users initiated contact with female-preferential language users more than female-preferential language users addressed male-preferential language users. Again, this result is likely due to the abundance of FP participants in comparison with MP participants.

The training and development site was the most FP/MP interactive with over half of the 149 MP/FP interactions. Specifically, one forum in particular within the training and development site was extremely male-preferential/female-preferential interactive despite having only eight total participants. The topic of that forum involved whether or not, and how, to incentivize internal subject matter experts (SMEs) to lead training initiatives. Interestingly, out of all 18 forums, this was the *least* female-preferential represented one (with only two FP participants), yet it was the *most* MP/FP interactive one.

In contrast to the training and development site, the nursing site was the *least* male-preferential/female-preferential interactive forum. All six of the forums in the nursing site were heavily populated with FP participants, thus limiting male-preferential/female-preferential interactions. Both the *highest* female-preferential populated and the *lowest* female-preferential populated forums within this site had *no* FP/MP interactions. The most MP/FP interactive forum in the nursing site contained roughly 70% FP participants, however, despite being the most MP/FP interactive, the

majority of the forum's postings were universal (i.e. directed to the group, not a specific person).

The mechanical engineering site contained roughly 30% of the 149 male-preferential/female-preferential interactions. The most MP/FP interactive forum within this site had about 75% female-preferential participants and ten MP/FP interactions. The two least FP/MP interactive forums in this site lacked overall participation with fewer than 20 postings each.

The above findings (#1-3) provide a broad overview of how the data within the 18 discussion forums represent preferential language usage and the composition of the interactions between male-preferential language users and female-preferential language users. These findings also delineate how preferential language use and male-preferential/female-preferential interactions occur within the varied industry sites of this study. They give insight into how gender preferential language is used within written online organizational communication across industries varying in male-preferential and female-preferential participation. The remainder of this chapter addresses specific findings as they pertain to the study's research questions of whether or not, and how, muting occurs.

Finding #4: Male-Preferential Language Dominance

Male-preferential participants involved in interactions with FP participants employed more male-preferential language dimensions than did the MP participants who did *not* interact with FP participants. As such, the six male-preferential language

characteristics were analyzed for themes of domination. These codes and their main themes are reported below.

Opinions. As mentioned, opinions are beliefs, perspectives, and/or personal interpretations of facts. These are different from direct statements of facts from knowledgeable resources. Opinions used by male-preferential language users during interactions with female-preferential language users contained two main themes: 1) representing personal opinions as verifiable facts, and 2) representing personal experiences as generic facts.

For example, regarding the first theme, P203MP (mechanical engineering site) speculates on the inclusion of a provision for one of the mechanical engineering association's quality standards: "it was included at the request of someone needing to weld a material like a one-off forging or casting for which there was no spare material available, and the Code language was simply included in a very careless fashion." This statement represents P203MP's opinion of why a quality standard was included in the association's standards as though it is a fact. Even if P203MP has factual information into how the aforementioned provision was included in the Standards, their assumption that it was "*simply* [emphasis added] included in a *very careless* [emphasis added] fashion" introduces personal beliefs that may or may not be factual. In other words, P203MP is representing their opinion as factual evidence.

Another example of this theme is when P108MP (nursing site) states, "all of this starts in school and the Philosophy has to change with a building up of students rather than a tearing them down first" when discussing a nursing culture where veteran nurses

bully novice nurses. P108MP's assumption that the bullying culture begins in nursing school and that the way to remedy the culture is to engage in "a building up of students" is represented as concrete knowledge rather than a personal opinion.

Regarding the second theme of opinions, representing personal experiences as facts, P59MP (nursing site) recalls their first nursing job experience and concludes by stating, "I don't understand the mentality of older veteran nurses. It would make their job so much easier if they were mentors to the young nurse." Recalling this personal experience, P59MP opines that veteran nurses' would enjoy a more relaxed job environment if they[3] served more as mentors than as bullies. Another example of this theme involves P2MP (training and development site) discussing their experience with a trainer who read verbatim from a MS PowerPoint slide: "Had he been taught how to personalize (and yes, that's a process term) his instructor materials, he would have found it much more difficult to read and bore his students to death." P2MP goes onto say, "I quite often find that outside vendors are received as experts on the subject far more readily than internal folks." Both of these statements offer seemingly relevant advice to another participant, but they also imply that this personal experience provides factual and logical instruction.

Whether opinions are represented as verifiable facts or personal experiences that can inform a multitude of situations, they are still subjective and biased. Offering opinions as though they are concrete evidence of the reality and truth of a situation serves to inhibit alternative suggestions and differing experiences from being stated

[3] Use of plural pronouns (e.g. they and/or their) are used to refer to individual participants in order to refrain from assumptions of participant gender or biological sex.

and/or heard. Given that users of female-preferential language are not prone to stating opinions (and when they do, they are entrenched in subordinating linguistic devices), and that this was the *most used* MP language characteristic, it stands to reason that opinions shaped in these ways offer little room for FP participants to respond given their language prescriptions.

Insults. Insults, as defined by this study, are intentional or accidental statements that demean or offend the person they are directed toward. Two main themes regarding insults emerged by male-preferential language users while interacting with female-preferential language users: 1) Personal knowledge/opinion as superior to a recipient or the general discussion, and 2) attacks to the recipient's character.

For example, in reference to the first theme, P203MP (mechanical engineering site) states, "to be candid, I think the provision is absolutely nuts. I would never countenance anything of the sort, and I also think it should be removed from the Code." P203MP is asserting that their opinion is superior not only to the organization's provision of quality standards, but is also asserting that their opinion is superior to members who stand by the provision. By stating that the provision "is nuts," P203MP not only insults the organization, but other participants in the forum who stand by the provision. Another example of the first insult theme is given by P3MP (training and development site) when stating, "if you're comfortable riding a unicycle, fine. I prefer four wheels and plenty of horsepower" in reiterating their argument that training instructors need more than just talent to deliver engaging instruction. These are not only

statements of superiority in opinion, but are condescending, to an insulting degree, to their recipients (who are FP participants).

Regarding the second theme of insults, P110MP (nursing site) provides an example of personal attacks to character by stating, "you are wasting their time, and you are being a pain in the ass" in response to a FP participant offering an explanation for why veteran nurses bully novice nurses. Another example of this theme occurs when P242MP (mechanical engineering site) states, "please get your facts correct before you go making statements about things you obviously don't have a clue about." This comment is directed toward an FP participant during a discussion of the legitimacy of a provision within a quality standard mandated by the mechanical engineering association. P242MP's statement directly insults the FP participant in their interpretation and understanding of the provision.

Together, these two themes of insults serve to dominate FP participants through offensive and intimidating means. This tactic can be considered bullying, and, when delivered in a more non-direct way, uncivil to the recipient. FP participants (i.e. non-dominant group members), with preferred outcomes of assimilation and accommodation (Orbe, 1996) and subordinate social roles (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), when faced with an insult, they have no recourse other than acting outside of their socialized role (e.g. retaliation and confrontation) or allowing the insult to go uncontested. Thus, increased use of insults is one way in which FP participants are muted.

Disagreeing. Disagreeing, as defined here, is to differ in opinion or dissent from previous comments. The top two themes that emerged from male-preferential language

users when interacting with female-preferential language users during statements of disagreement were: 1) disagreeing with the structure and/or status quo of the topic of discussion, and 2) disagreeing with the statement of a female-preferential language user.

For instance, regarding the first theme, during a discussion on organizational changes made by the administrators of the mechanical engineering association, P244MP states, "The thing that I don't accept, without protest, is the change that has rushed to delete organizational activities and groups before any plan was in place to replace them." Another example of this theme is seen in the nursing site during a discussion on the nursing industry's culture of bullying from veteran nurses to novice nurses: "Preceptors need to be trained and not just thrown into the roleas [*sic*] many of us 'Senior' nurses have" (P64MP). Although statements such as these are directed at the system or culture of an organization/industry, they are presented within a larger comment directed toward a female-preferential language user. The statement made by P244MP was in disagreement with the organization's recent changes, but was also in disagreement with the female-preferential language user who was defending the organizational changes. P64MP's comment was directed at the system of assigning mentors, or preceptors, to novice nurses, but was also a statement of disagreement to a posting by an FP participant who suggested veteran nurses were unfit mentors and acted more like bullies.

The second theme of disagreement, directly opposing a FP participant, is evidenced by P176MP's (nursing site) statement, "you're telling me you never had a battle with ethics in the work place... i [*sic*] find that hard to believe.. we are human theres [*sic*] always situations we are bound to be torn with unless your made of stone."

P176MP disagrees with the comment made by an FP participant about never having an ethical dilemma on the job. Another example of this theme is P6MP's (training and development site) statement, "however, I do not agree with your statement that you would never use SMEs to instruct. Oh my goodness, what a waste of a resource (in my humble opinion)!" P6MP expresses their disagreement with an FP participant that internal SMEs should not be used as training instructors.

The second theme mentioned shows a *direct* opposition from male-preferential language users to female-preferential language users, whereas the first theme shows an *indirect* opposition. Additionally, as evidenced by the examples, the statements of disagreement provide little room for a difference of opinion. For example, when P244MP states their disapproval of the handling of organizational changes, they assert their opinion "without protest," (traditionally a financial clause to ensure the repayment of a bill, but colloquially a way to claim certainty of opinion). In doing so, P244MP shuts out opinions that are contrary to their own. As a result of these statements, female-preferential language users are rendered mute as they either act contrary to their preferred language (i.e. utilize MP language to disagree, insult, or offer different opinions), ignore the disagreement, or refuse to engage in any more interactions with the MP participant.

Intensive adjectives. Intensive adjectives denote strong, forceful descriptions of the noun(s) they precede. Two main themes emerged regarding intensive adjectives from the interactions between male-preferential and female-preferential language users.

First, intensive adjectives were utilized in emphasizing opinions and beliefs. Second, intensive adjectives were utilized in emphasizing statements of disagreement.

For example, during a discussion about the usefulness of the association's online forums, P201MP (mechanical engineering) states, "I just read *quite a few very long involved* [emphasis added] answers and most of what I would say has already been said." P201MP goes on to state the ineffectualness of the forums for technical advice. P201MP's posting follows P197FP's praise of the Women in Engineering group's activity within the forum and suggestions for improvement in participation of other groups' forums. Although P201MP suggests there is nothing new to add to the discussion, they nevertheless foreshadow their negative feelings about the usefulness of the forums by implying significant effort taken to read the forums in emphasizing the quantity, length and depth of them.

P203MP provides another example of how intensive adjectives reinforce opinions by stating, "…higher P-numbers may be so totally inappropriate to lower P-nimbers [*sic*] that the weld would never pass the mechanical tests, perhaps because of some *screwball* [emphasis added] admixture of alloying elements." P203MP's statement conveys a belief that inappropriate preparations were taken during a welding procedure. Not only does P203MP provide a difference of opinion regarding the mixture of alloying elements, but they utilize the intensive adjective *screwball* to express this opinion in a significant fashion.

Intensive adjectives were also utilized by MP participants in their interactions with FP participants to emphasize their disagreements. For example, P244MP states,

"this is but one example of *gross* [emphasis added] mis-management of this change." According to P244MP, the changes taking place in the mechanical engineering association, changes in which a FP participant was in support of, were so inappropriate that they were described as "gross mis-management." This male-preferential language characteristic ultimately serves to emphasize two *other* male-preferential language characteristics: Stating opinions and disagreeing; thus reinforcing muting already in place.

Emphasizing differences. Statements emphasizing differences highlight areas of dissimilarity between oneself and another individual or group of individuals. Two major themes emerged from these statements from male-preferential language users toward female-preferential language users. First, there were statements that were directed toward a group (me versus them) and second, there were statements that were directed toward a specific individual (me versus you).

For example, in a discussion regarding how veteran nurses fail to properly mentor new nurses, P66MP states, "I know I can learn something from just about everyone and their own experience, fresh out of school or work experience elsewhere. Not like the 'brotherhood' with cops, firefighters, etc." This statement emphasizes differences between service industries which are greatly divergent in gender representation (nursing being highly populated by females whereas police and firefighters are primarily male-populated industries). The reference to "brotherhood" highlights this difference. This emphasis is interesting considering the preferential

language that P66MP uses (male-preferential) within a highly female-dominant profession.

Another example of this me versus group theme is seen during a discussion about the lack of facilitation and participation within the mechanical engineering site's communities of practice. P203MP disparages the association's administrators for twice using organizational funds to finance very similar failing online projects by stating, "engineers are supposed to learn from mistakes--certainly from their own mistakes, but it looks like we're headed down the primrose path once again." Both of the examples provided in this theme target a group, rather than an individual, but they were in response to statements by individuals who had differing opinions. P66MP, as a veteran nurse, defends their position as a good mentor by affirming their virtues against that of other service professions. Although P203MP is included in his or her statement about engineers (i.e. "*we're* headed"), there is clear disappointment in the management of the association and, in saying so, P203MP separates themselves from those who are not 'learning from their mistakes.'

The second major theme of statements emphasizing differences was direct statements to another individual (me versus you). For example, P242MP (mechanical engineering) states "I live and breathe [Association Standards] unlike you who have some misconceived idea that you know what you are talking about." P242MP disagrees with the statement(s) made previous to their previous comment, but does not specify why or how they disagree. Rather, P242MP asserts that they have a deeper knowledge

and understanding over the subject matter and, moreover, that the other individual has only delusions of knowledge and understanding.

Both themes of statements emphasizing differences serve to segregate the speaker from the recipient. Moreover, this segregation is enveloped within the context where the speaker has 'superior' opinions and behaviors. Whether asserted directly, or indirectly, statements that emphasize differences alienate their recipients as inferior.

Giving directives. This male-preferential language characteristic involves statements where an authoritative order was given. The one main theme drawn from these statements was *educational instruction*. For example, during a debate on whether the quality of training relies on the quality of training materials, P3MP (training and development site) states, "create better materials (or a better process)" in response to P1FP's assertion that his or her organization's training program suffers due to a lack of funds to purchase materials. P3MP provides a solution for change (albeit nonspecific) to P1FP's dilemma. Another example presents itself when P117MP (nursing site) instructions P112FP to take initiative at work, "instead of confronting your aide, just simply go and take the glucose yourself." P117MP is assuming that it is a 'simple' act to bypass one's aide and check a patient's glucose level.

Yet another example of a MP participant giving a directive to a FP participant occurs during a debate on the interpretation of process standards in the mechanical engineering site when P203MP states, "this is all covered in great detail in Section IX and should be in your QA manual. *Get busy and start reading the references you have* [emphasis added]." P203 MP was instructing the recipient to access their resources.

Implicit in this statement (and the context surrounding it) is that the recipient is misguided in their own interpretation of the standard in question and P203MP is directing them to an appropriate source.

Another example occurs during a discussion in the training and development forum regarding in-house subject matter experts designing and implementing their own training modules as P2MP states, "don't confuse subject matter knowledge with the ability to teach." P2MP is instructing the FP recipient not to assume that in-house subject matter experts have the ability to teach well. As such, P2MP is disagreeing with the recipient's claim that SMEs are a suitable solution to organizational training needs without providing any further explanation. Rather, P2MP takes a position of authority in knowledge and directs the recipient to change their own understanding.

A final example occurs when P71MP (nursing site) suggests "*never let anyone stand in your way* [emphasis added] No one is perfect we all make mistakes you let them orter [*sic*] nurses knw [*sic*] that everyone is a novice before they become experts" to a FP participant who described their negative experiences when beginning a new job after nursing school. This is an example of how P71MP is outwardly in support of the other individual's experiences. However, instructing them to "never let anyone" stand in their way and to "let them [other] nurses [know]" that mistakes happen to all novice nurses, assumes a context where the FP participant does not fear retaliation, or losing their job, or that they are in a position where they *can* stand up to veteran nurses in their workplace. The adage of pulling oneself up by their bootstraps is one that ignores a

system of domination and power struggles whereby, without support, some individuals will continue to be torn down.

To review, while separating the FP/MP interactions from the overall postings, the MP participants involved in interactions with FP participants employed a greater use of male-preferential language than did the MP participants who did *not* interact with FP participants. As such, the six male-preferential language characteristics were analyzed for themes of domination and were described above. Next, a discussion on the use of gender-specific pronouns provides insight into another way MP language dominates FP language (and users of FP language) within these online organizational discussion forums.

Finding #5: Pronoun Assumptions

Of the 246 participants, only eight disclosed their biological sex during the conversations within the discussion forums (six males and two females). Within the training and development forum, only one of the 38 participants disclosed their sex; P2MP states, "[P3MP], I want to have your baby...only kidding. I'm a man, so I coldn't [*sic*]. Well...maybe. All that aside, your post concerning talent vs. instructors is right on target."

The mechanical engineering site had two of their 65 participants disclose their biological sex. P197FP states, "I think we've finally hit a critical mass in the Women in Engineering group. I know people have been posting a lot because I get notifications about it in my e-mail..." Although P197FP doesn't directly state her biological sex, she directly states her participation in the Women in Engineering discussion group, thus

indirectly suggesting her biological sex is female. Within the same site, P213MP states, "let's face it we are the 'man behind the curtain' and are ignored accordingly." Again, while P213MP does not directly state his sex as male, he includes himself in a masculine metaphor that explicitly stereotypes mechanical engineers as men.

The nursing site contained five participants who disclosed their biological sex out of the 143 participants within the forums. Interestingly, this is the only site where preferential language (i.e. MP and FP) is incongruent with biological sex (i.e. male or female). Moreover, *all* five participants who disclosed their biological sex utilized incongruent preferential language. First, P91FP states, "Whenever other nurses have felt intimidated by me as a strong Male nurse they have resulted with contempt and lies." Second, P75MP states, "We outnumber men and have always had to compete for lasting relationships with them... Allowing another woman to come close to being our equal in a working relationship I'm not sure is within our nature" Third, P112FP states, "This CNA was extremely rude to me as a MALE nursing student and definitely wanted to make her authority over me known." Fourth, P77FP states, "I'm male and feel like a square peg in a round hole sometimes." And finally, P104FP states, "I am a 51 yo [*sic*] male in nursing now, have experienced horizontal violence at every hospital I've been at."

Despite only 3% of the participants disclosing their biological sex, 27% of the total participants utilized gender-specific pronouns. Moreover, although over 80% of the total postings were initiated by a FP participant, *and* there being an overwhelming amount of overall FP participants (nearly 65%) in comparison with MP participants

(nearly 27%), use of masculine pronouns (e.g. he, him, his) was on par with use of feminine pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers) with 180 references to masculine pronouns and 181 references to feminine pronouns[4]. This finding is partially due to the lingering propensity to reference generic and hypothetical persons as male. For example, P242MP (mechanical engineering site) states, "It is totally impractical to have a procedure for every base material and it is totally impractical to test a welder on every different base material *he* [emphasis added] may weld on." Similarly, P241FP (mechanical engineering site) states, "When a purchaser comes to us and ask if we have ISO9000 certification, I know we are not dealing with an engineer and the person probably doesn't know what *he* [emphasis added] is buying." The latter example also illustrates how female-preferential language users assimilate to the dominant language that mutes them. It should be noted that, although rare, there were a few instances of referring to a generic person as female (this solely occurred in the nursing forums). For example, P87FP states, "I think it is about power too. The more experienced nurse wants to see the newbie fall on *her* [emphasis added] face and then rush in to save the day."

Many forum participants chose to include both masculine and feminine pronouns when referencing generic persons. For example, P4FP (training and development forum) states, "'I'm trying to point out that every employee is affected by so much more than *his/her* [emphasis added] own 'simplistic' needs." MP participants also used this inclusive pronoun reference as evidenced by P6MP's (training and development site) statement, "The best instructors have the innate talent to be effective in front of a group,

[4] All pronoun references regarding non-participants (e.g. a participant's boss or coworker) were *not* counted as references

readily apply techniques that will make *him/her* [emphasis added] better, be an SME, and love what *he/she* [emphasis added] is doing!" Despite the inclusion of feminine pronouns, however, all of these references placed the masculine pronoun primary to the feminine pronouns. That is, there were no examples such as *s/he, hers or his, her/him*, or *she and/or he*.

Female-preferential participants used feminine pronouns more often than they used masculine pronouns at 2.38 references per 1,000 words as compared to 1.92 references per 1,000 words. Male-preferential participants used masculine pronouns more often than they did feminine pronouns at 2.19 references per 1,000 words as compared to 0.79 references per 1,000 words. Thus, although FP participants used feminine pronouns more than masculine pronouns, they did so by a narrow margin.

The training and development site contained the most participants utilizing gender-specific pronouns, but only slightly above the nursing site. The mechanical engineering site contained 23.08% of their participants utilizing gender-specific pronouns. See Appendix G, table 5, for a detailed breakdown of pronoun use by organizational site. Interestingly, within interactions between MP participants and FP participants, MP participants used feminine pronouns at the same rate as they did within the general discussion (despite their direct communication with a FP participant). Moreover, MP participants averaged more masculine pronouns per 1,000 words within these interactions than they did within the general discussion. Conversely, FP participants were more than twice as likely to use masculine pronouns during these interactions as they were in general discussion. This finding suggests the propensity to

use masculine address when the sex of a person is not likely known. To 'default' to male-centered (dominant group) assumptions maintains the structure of male dominance and excludes what, and who, represent females.

Findings four and five directly address the first research sub-question: What male-preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance? First, the increased use of male-preferential language characteristics by MP participants during interactions with FP participants led to an analysis of those characteristics during MP/FP interactions. Themes of MP dominance from this analysis were discussed in finding four. Second, pronoun usage and assumptions were uncovered as another strategy of MP dominance. Trends of overall pronoun use and pronoun use within FP/MP interactions were reviewed within finding #5. Next we turn to the second sub-question (female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions used when responding to male-preferential dominance) and discuss strategies of communication by FP participants during interactions with MP participants.

Finding #6: Co-Cultural Communication Strategies

To reiterate, the second research sub-question is: What female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? Orbe (1996) suggests that non-dominant groups engage in a variety of 12 communication strategies based on communication style (e.g. assertive, nonassertive, or aggressive) and preferred outcome (e.g. separation, accommodation, or assimilation) when interacting with dominant group members. See Appendix B for a list and description of all 12 co-cultural communication strategies.

As mentioned, three of these strategies were established as indeterminable within online organizational discussion forums (extensive preparation, countering stereotypes, and manipulating stereotypes). Extensive preparation involves rehearsal and planning for interactions with dominant groups. For example, within an online discussion forum, field research, academic resources, and gathering information from colleagues may all contribute to a posting by a FP participant to a MP participant. However, within the confines of this study, these efforts are not determinable. Countering stereotypes entails avoiding behaviors and topics that are associated with negative stereotypes of the non-dominant group. Examples of countering stereotypes may show up in FP participants' comments which utilize MP language codes, and/or biological men/women portraying themselves as an alternative gender online, and/or FP participant's forging into a field where over 90% of the population is the opposite sex. Manipulating stereotypes, in contrast to countering stereotypes, involves using common topics, roles, and behaviors associated with feminine stereotypes when personal gain can be obtained from them. For example, a male or female participant may portray themselves as overtly FP in order to appear non-threatening, harmless, and/or naïve in order to influence the outcome of an interaction.

Due to the lack of determinability of these three co-cultural communication strategies, only nine strategies were used to analyze FP participants' interactions with MP participants. Indication of these remaining nine co-cultural communication strategies within FP/MP participant interactions was explored to determine evidence of muteness of FP voice. Additionally, the communication strategies, themselves, are

discussed for their potential contribution to the muting process. Results of the nine co-cultural communication strategies as demonstrated by FP participants during their interactions with MP participants are organized by the three co-cultural preferred outcomes and discussed below.

Assimilation strategies. According to Orbe (1996), assimilation is the most common preferred outcome among non-dominant groups. Assimilation is defined as a desire to fit in with the dominant group by eliminating cultural differences and non-dominant descriptors (Orbe, 1998) and involves the following communication strategies: Idealized communication, respectful communication, self-censorship, extensive preparation, manipulating stereotypes, and mirroring. Despite eliminating extensive preparation and manipulating stereotypes due to their lack of determinability, similar to Orbe's (1996) findings, assimilation strategies accounted for nearly two-thirds of all the co-cultural communication strategies utilized by FP participants during their interactions with MP participants. The remaining four assimilation strategies, respectful communication, mirroring, idealized communication, and self-censorship are discussed below.

Respectful communication. This strategy was the most used assimilation strategy as well as the most used co-cultural communication strategy overall. Respectful communication involves stroking the ideals of dominant group members and attempts to appear non-threatening (Orbe, 1996; 1998). Three themes emerged from FP participants utilizing this strategy: Agreement, thankfulness, and compliments. For example, P221FP (mechanical engineering site) responds to suggestions by a male-preferential

language user to create partnerships between the mechanical engineering association and higher education institutions by claiming, "I think these partnerships may have GREAT technical, academical [*sic*], cultural and social value and we should make it work and make the best out them!" P221FP is not simply agreeing with the MP participant, but proclaiming agreement with such enthusiastic support that it serves to praise the MP participant. Likewise, P97FP (nursing site) states, "You just made my heart sing. God Bless You. That is the best advice ever. I hope it is contagious" in response to a MP participant's advice to find positive courses of action and ways to take initiative on the job as a new nurse when a mentor is being unhelpful or acting as a bully. P97FP is *expressively* thankful in their response. Similarly, P1FP (training and development site) praises a MP participant's controversial advice on incentivizing SMEs by stating, "Your response is so eloquent and to the point." The response P1FP is referring to elicited staunch criticism from others in the forum (both MP and FP participants alike) for belittling trainers, yet P1FP praises the comment. Finally, P45FP (nursing site) writes, "I agree with every word you wrote in your post" in response to a male-preferential language user offering positive nursing advice. Not only does P45FP agree, they convey agreement in dramatic fashion by stating that they agree with "every word."

Mirroring. The second most utilized assimilation strategy was mirroring. This strategy involves the utilization of communication style(s) typical of the dominant group. That is, when FP participants emulate MP language style. The main MP language characteristics utilized by FP participants when interacting with MP

participants were opinions, disagreements, and giving directives. For example, P4FP (training and development site) states:

> The fact remains that presentation should be only a fraction of what a good learning facilitator does. Learning is not about the materials or the presentation -- it's about what the LEARNER does to encounter, integrate, practice, and apply the new learning.

P4FP's statement is an opinion that they represent as factual information, echoing the theme of MP dominance by MP participants through stating opinions as similarly. Likewise, P97FP (nursing site) gives a callous opinion on the culture in the nursing field in responding to a MP participant's complaints about female veteran nurses bullying novice male nurses:

> Women have dominated the Nursing Profession for centuries and have not learned how to be a Team Player because there has never been a demand. The Nursing Model is and has always been autocratic. Women Nurses either become "Control Freaks" or "Gold Bricks". If they are a Control Freaks they nitpick everything and can't trust anyone to do anything right. If they become Gold Bricks they will sit at the Nurse's Station and read the Newspaper while you run your butt off or delegate everything he/she dosen't [*sic*]want to do to someone who can't say no.

P97FP draws upon personal experience when giving this perspective of the nursing field. Veteran female nurses are criticized and designated to one of two (negative) stereotypes

("control freak" or "gold brick"). This opinion allows no room for alternative perspectives and offers no constructive solution.

An example of mirroring through disagreement can be seen in P24FP's (training and development site) statement, "I find the assertion that there's no such thing as a stand alone training department bizarre and disingenuous." This comment states P24FP's disagreement with an MP participant's remark that training departments are nonexistent because all training is administered through subject matter experts both within and outside of the organization. P24FP is not just disagreeing, but questioning the normality ("bizarre") and honesty ("disingenuous") of the MP participant's comment.

Similarly, P245FP (mechanical engineering site) states, "it's also important to note that [association] does not have any 'bad' programs. Reduced funding does not mean a 'bad' program," in response to a MP participant's assertion that the association grossly mismanages finances toward its various programs. Within this forum, many participants expressed negativity toward the mechanical engineering association's leadership. P245FP provided lengthy responses to each of them in defense of the association, and in disagreement with many of the forum participants.

An example of giving a directive can be seen by P4FP's (training and development site) statement, "*Do not move forward* [emphasis added] with the assumption that if you have incentives ('cheap' at that), that will make people want to jump on the training bandwagon." P4FP is instructing a MP participant to heed advice. Likewise, P109FP (nursing site) offers advice to a MP participant who feels bullied by their supervisor, "*examine the situation* [emphasis added]: Did you err? Could you have

done something better? or is the nurses criticism without merit? I do not think I can repeat this enough for you new nurses out there...*don't take it personally* [emphasis added]." P109FP instructs the MP participant to reevaluate the situation from the supervisor's point of view, but then ends the advice by telling the MP participant not to be too sensitive about it. Removing emotion from the workplace is common advice, but whether and how that is realistically possible is debatable, especially in a profession where sensitivity and care are quality standards.

These examples demonstrate the main themes of mirroring as a communication strategy used by FP participants (opinions, disagreements, and giving directives). As mentioned, they do not just represent male-preferential characteristics, but they maintain the themes of MP dominance uncovered in finding #4. That is, FP participants were not simply using MP language styles, they were using them *in the same way* MP participants used them. This mirroring of MP language demonstrates the assimilation to male 'articulateness' that Ardener uncovered when founding muted group theory.

Idealized communication. Idealized communication was the third most used communication strategy by FP participants within the preferred outcome category of assimilation. This strategy involves downplaying differences and emphasizing similarities between oneself and the dominant group. In essence this strategy aims to promulgate a utopian view during interactions with a dominant group member. This strategy overlaps with the FP language dimension of 'statements emphasizing similarity or solidarity.' Two main ways FP participants displayed idealized communication were by highlighting commonalities and providing statements of agreement.

For example, during a discussion on quality standards, P241FP (mechanical engineering) states, "*as Engineers, we can appreciate* [emphasis added] that for certain processes like GTAW for example, there is little change in the other essential variables eventhough [*sic*] the A-No. is not the same." This comment brings the group together "as engineers" at a time when the discussion was becoming heated regarding the interpretation of one of the quality standards. P245FP (mechanical engineering) echoes this sentiment when responding to concerns about the direction of the mechanical engineering association:

> *Working together* [emphasis added], I know that *we can solve* [emphasis added] the situations you describe, and any others, moving [the association] forward to be more valuable and beneficial, as we need to do--as we must do. *And we can do it working together* [emphasis added]. That's the fun part.

These two comments promote an idealized view of how individuals may come together through their commonalities in attainment of goals. Despite statements of divergence by MP participants, these female-preferential language users focus on group similarities to promote cohesion.

Yet another example of idealized communication is seen by P60FP (nursing site) in agreement and understanding of MP participant comments regarding the negative behavior from veteran nurses to novice nurses, "All nurses started as newcomers in an institution and adjusting to a new working environment is not easy. I hope we can eliminate this from the nursing profession. Nurses should learn from each other." P60FP is attempting to bring everyone together (novices and veterans) by noting that everyone

was a new nurse at some point and empathy will help veteran nurses alleviate their frustrations with novice nurses.

Lastly, P26FP (training and development site) expresses commonality with an MP participant when discussing previous nomenclature of human resource departments, "I remember those days, too  My thought was that HR = Personnel + T&D." P26FP attempts to reminisce with the MP participant and later inquires about the MP participant's experiences throughout changes within the field. P26FP is highlighting their similarity with the MP participant and establishing a connection through idealized communication.

Although idealized communication strategies promote positivity, solidarity, and cohesion, they serve to promote MP dominance by highlighting similarities FP members have with MP members. Downplaying differences between MP members and FP members mutes FP voice and identity through emphasizing MP commonalities and assimilating to dominant group norms.

Self-censorship. Self-censorship was the least used assimilation strategy by FP participants. To self-censor is to hold back, say nothing, or ignore offending remarks. Self-censorship was coded when an insult or pointed disagreement was directed from an MP participant to an FP participant and the FP participant replied to the general comment, but did not address the insult or points of dispute. Insults accounted for less than 3% of the total preferential language codes, thus it is not surprising that self-censorship as a female-preferential communication strategy was barely utilized. Interestingly, this communication strategy was solely present in the training and

development site forums. FP participants in the nursing and mechanical engineering forums did not use self-censorship as a communication strategy when interacting with MP participants. However, this is likely due to the limited occurrences of insults, overall, and because the training and development site had the most MP/FP interactions.

When self-censorship was used, it was typically as a result of a MP participant commenting that an FP participant provided statements that were somehow inferior to the MP participant's own statement. For example, after P6MP likens training instructors to children, he or she then accuses P4FP of overreacting to their comment when they state, "I will not retract what I said, because I still believe it to be true, in the context of the discussion. It was not meant to be a 'sweeping generalization' of all instructors in every instance- geesh.... LOL." P6MP stands by their original comment and faults the P4FP with exaggerating their claim. Moreover, P6MP mocks the female-preferential language user at the end of their comment with "geesh" and "LOL." In this case, the P4FP replies to P6MP's general comments, but does not respond to their comment above. P4FP utilizes self-censorship again when P3MP states, "In taking [P6MP] to task, have you respected his professionalism as you would have him respect our profession? Take a good look." Although P4FP responds to other statements in P3MP's post, P4FP does not reply to the suggestion that they have disrespected P6MP.

Self-censorship as a strategy suppresses responses to MP members' pointed opposition and slights. Although this strategy serves to avoid conflict, it allows dominant group members to bully non-dominant groups with no consequences.

Separation. The second most preferred co-cultural communication outcome was separation. Orbe argues that this is the *least* preferred outcome (behind assimilation and accommodation), but within the online discussion forums of this study, separation strategies were used slightly more than accommodation strategies. Separation has the goal of staying among one's own rather than interacting with dominant group members (Orbe, 1996). Nearly 30% of all the co-cultural communication strategies fall into this outcome. According to Orbe (1996), separation strategies encompass avoidance and self-assured communication[5].

Self-assured communication. Self-assured communication includes comments where confidence and self-esteem shine through and participants are "simply being themselves" (Orbe, 1996, p. 168). The main theme that emerged through this communication strategy was self-confidence in one's own knowledge, facts, and/or understanding of the topic being discussed. Some of these examples overlap with MP language dimensions (e.g. opinion, giving a directive) and mirroring strategies. Indeed, many of the co-cultural communication strategies were used in conjunction with one another. For example, in response to the suggested number of association members, P187FP (mechanical engineering site) corrects an MP participant by stating, "even though 125,000 is the claimed number of [Association] members, the true count is between 85,000 and 100,000." This example also represents an opinion (an MP language dimension), and is an example of mirroring. It is an illustration of self-assured communication, as well, because of the confidence P187FP portrays in their knowledge

[5] Note that self-assured communication is considered both an assertive *separation* tactic and an assertive *accommodation* tactic. See table 1 in Chapter II.

and in voicing it to a dominant group member. Likewise, in a statement of disagreement to P204MP's contention that mechanical engineers should require professional education, P205FP (mechanical engineering site) states:

> The MD is a university degree, rather than a license to practice. However, the CPA is a certification that is mostly optional for Accounting graduates (who, like engineers, can work professionally with a BS degree)... I can say that about 1/3 of [Association] members (somewhere between 25,000-30,000) are licensed in at least one state, and from what I know of the make-up of [Association] membership, I would be confortable [*sic*] suggesting that the % of all ME's who are licensed is a bit smaller.

These comments not only question the opinion stated by P204MP, but assert confidence in P205FP's own understanding and knowledge of the field. Note that, however, despite this confidence, P205FP's statement is saturated with modals and hedges, thus subordinating their opinion. Another example of self-assured communication is when P4FP (training and development site) questions a MP participant's contention that talent does not aid in training instruction by stating, "If you have a different opinion, please offer it up." P4FP clearly believes talent plays a role in the quality of training instruction and challenges the MP participant to explain why he or she thinks talent is irrelevant.

Lastly, during a discussion about whether trainers should incorporate narration of on-screen text during presentations, P17FP (training and development site) offers a case for why it might be better to refrain from reading text aloud by stating, "another argument is that in many situations, it's good to give the learners control over the pace of

instruction. If you're reading to a learner, you're controlling the pace." During the same discussion, P9FP challenges an MP participant's assertion that the topic itself (whether to read on-screen text to learners during training sessions) is irrelevant until training design is discussed:

> I started this topic because it is an ongoing, specific issue in my eLearning programs. I did not intend to cheer on eLearning as the only delivery mode, nor suggest that learning design take a back seat to content development. Those are good discussions to have...BUT I do not think discussing the redundancy issue as it relates to cognitive processing is doing a disservice.

P17FP and P9FP similarly convey confidence in their statements directed at MP participants, and they do so without apology. They are secure in their convictions and, if their convictions counter MP participants' convictions, they state them regardless.

Self-assured communication is used to maintain separation from the dominant group (i.e. refusal to assimilate) or it is used to accommodate the dominant group (i.e. maintain one's identity while obliging to dominant structures). The current study does not discriminate examples of self-assurance between these two preferred outcomes. Rather, the overall presence of the strategy aids in answering the research questions.

Avoidance. This co-cultural communication strategy entails refraining from interaction with dominant groups and only communicating with dominant group members when it is absolutely necessary (Orbe, 1996). Instances of avoidance were coded when a MP participant directed comments toward a FP participant and the FP participant did not respond to the MP participant, but subsequently responded to another

FP participant. Thus, the MP participant's comments were analyzed for themes. The main theme was statements of advice, suggestions, and explanations for previously mentioned questions and topics.

For example, during a discussion on the relevance of communities of practice (COPs) within the mechanical engineering site, P183MP states:

> If you feel strongly about having a COP for student homework, then I would encourage you to start such a COP. Anyone can start a COP, and being a facilitator is relatively easy; there is a good support system in place."

Although P183MP's comment is in support of the FP participant to begin and/or facilitate a COP related to their original question, the FP participant does not reply.

Another example of avoidance is when, during a discussion on how to incentivize internal subject matter experts to deliver quality training, P3MP asks a FP participant, "do I have this straight? Get the SMEs to value a training role delivering required subjects by offering them incentives (cheap, of course) to do so?" The FP participant did not reply to this question, yet continued to reply to other comments throughout the discussion forum.

Accommodation. This preferred outcome results from non-dominant group members wishing to keep their distinctive identity while effectively communicating with dominant group members (Orbe, 1996). Just over 25% of the co-cultural communication strategies fell within this preferred outcome. Co-cultural communication strategies that aim for accommodation are: Increased visibility, self-assured communication, utilization of liaisons, confrontational tactics, and countering

stereotypes. As discussed, countering stereotypes is undeterminable for the purpose of this study and self-assured communication was previously elaborated upon, however, the remaining three are discussed below.

Utilization of liaisons. Drawing upon liaisons within one's own group, but also liaisons who are dominant group members provides support for non-dominant group members during interactions with the dominant group (Orbe, 1996). However, within the context of these discussion forums, this communication strategy had little opportunity to present itself. Instead, FP participants turned to professional resources and research to aid as support during their interactions with male-preferential users. For example, during a discussion on the direction of the mechanical engineering association, P245FP states:

> Are you familiar with the book, *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It--A Guide for Leading Change,* by Robert E. Quinn? It's a metaphor (and a good book) for what [Knowledge & Community] is doing (and what all of us are doing).

P245FP is suggesting this resource as a reference for the MP participant who criticized the association's leadership decisions.

Similarly, P4FP (training and development site) adamantly disagrees with the suggestion that subject matter knowledge requires tangible resources more so than hands-on experiences by stating:

> Since you seem to require a perspective that's written in a book, I will point you towards one of the most commonly used text books on the subject: *Mastering the*

> *Instructional Design Process* by William J. Rothwell and H.C. Kazanas. In the second edition of the tome, go to pages 5 - 9 (for starters).

Lastly, P240FP (mechanical engineering site) appeals to the association's online resources by stating:

> A procedure qualified with P1 - P1 materials may NOT be substituted for welding P1 to any other P number whereas for performance, a welder qualified with P1 materials using F6 filler (example only) may weld all of the base metal combinations permitted within QW-423 so long as the essential variables are followed. *If in doubt, visit www.sperkoengineering.com* [emphasis added].

These FP participants relied on scholarly and/or professional resources to help make their argument when interacting with male-preferential language users. This finding is different from Orbe's finding in spoken communication between where non-dominant groups use their relations with *other individuals* to bolster their claims during interactions with dominant group members. However, the premise of seeking support from (dominant group) accepted and a legitimate source remains the same.

Increased visibility. Where some strategies (e.g. idealized communication and mirroring) serve to reduce one's visibility, some FP participants sought to decrease neutrality and increase their visibility. For example, P9FP (training and development site) initiated a discussion forum seeking advice on how to go about making a career change to working inside a company, but the conversation evolved into a discussion of the pros and cons of being an external or internal consultant. Instead of letting the discussion continue down this path, P9FP posted, "I think this thread has taken a slight

turn into a question of whether to become an independent contractor or not. My original questions still stand…" In reiterating the original questions, P9FP was able to turn the attention back to him- or herself and thus increase visibility. Although this communication strategy was utilized in these discussion forums, its occurrence was rare.

Confrontational tactics. The least used communication strategy was the use of confrontational tactics. Although some co-cultural communication strategies "delicately contest the structures of dominant society" (Orbe, 2006, p. 169) such as increased visibility and self-assured communication, confrontational tactics take on more aggressive methods. These were rarely used, but when they were, they typically involved condescension directed at a MP participant. For example, P4FP (training and development site) states, "surely you recognize that practical application of skills and knowledge -- the EXPERIENCES we build through our careers -- is what this is all about" after an MP participant suggested that subject matter experts do not need talent to teach. P4FP patronizes the MP participant by suggesting the only correct perspective to have is one that credits experience with subject matter knowledge. By default, the MP participant, if they disagree with P4FP, is unknowledgeable.

The above discussion addresses the co-cultural communication strategies used by FP participants. Major themes for each strategy were uncovered and discussed. For details on the percentages of use for each strategy see table 6 in Appendix H. Through determining whether and how FP participants employ co-cultural communication strategies within their interactions with MP participants, FP participants are engaging in them within the system of muteness of non-dominant groups (i.e. female-preferential

language users) by dominant groups (i.e. male-preferential language users) as Orbe suggests.

Finding #7: Metaphors

During data analysis, a new question emerged when noticing the recurrence of metaphors throughout the entirety of the discussion forums: How are metaphors used across preferential language, organizational site, and during MP/FP interactions? This question led to the revision of the second research sub-question to include non-dominant communication strategies *outside* of Orbe's 12 co-cultural communication strategies: what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? Analysis of metaphor frequency and metaphor type across preferential language and organizational sites delineates who is using metaphors and how they are being applied, and it gives insight into strategies of communication by both dominant and non-dominant groups during interactions with each other and during interactions with their own group members.

Overall, MP participants used 5.58 metaphors per 1,000 words and FP participants used 4.23 metaphors per 1,000 words. Slightly over half of all MP participants utilized metaphors, and slightly less than half of all FP participants utilized metaphors. Turning attention to the three organizational sites, over 60% of the training and development site participants utilized metaphors. Nearly half of the nursing forum participants utilized metaphors. Finally, about 35% the mechanical engineering forum participants used metaphors. The rest of this section highlights the types of metaphor

used, followed by a discussion of their use by MP and FP participants, and concludes with a discussion on how metaphors are used within MP/FP interactions.

Metaphor type. Five major metaphor types emerged during content analysis of metaphors: 1) Organic, 2) Military, 3) Games/Sports, 4) Physical violence, and 5) Mechanics/Construction. Other themes worth noting, though not largely utilized, were: Inanimate household items, child/children, the arts, and school/education. The five major themes are discussed in the sections below.

Organic. Metaphors included in this category include references to plants, animals, food/eating, the human body, and the earth's natural elements, with food/eating and the human body being the largest sub categories of this metaphor type. Organic metaphors were used the most (nearly 40% of all metaphors fell into this category). Examples of organic metaphors include, "I have *thick skin* [emphasis added], and gossip doesn't bother me..." (P55FP; nursing site), "it's rather pointless to rail against the winds of layers in organizations" (P25FP; training and development site), "can someone shed some light on this" (P182FP, mechanical engineering site), "let it surround you like a cloud (P109FP; nursing site), and:

> oh, don't get me wrong..once in a great while, *you will meet a carnivore in ICU, but they quickly adjust to vegetarian* [emphasis added] as in the unit teamwork is essential and *petty carnivore antics* [emphasis added] are not tolerated. (P120FP, nursing site)

Military. References to military behaviors were the second most used metaphor type (representing over 15% of all metaphors). This category encompasses references to

rank, battle, war, and nautical ventures. For example, P244MP provides a nautical metaphor when suggesting that mechanical engineering association leaders "continue to steer the ship into a fog." P3MP (training and development site), states as a closing to their posting on in-house subject matter expert training, "catch you on the flip side, control… 😎." When responding to a heated discussion about the appropriateness of training being housed within human resource departments, P25FP tells another forum participant "You have met the enemy and it is, indeed you." During a discussion about whether operations employees or human resources should conduct training P11FP states, "nearly all the calls I get are *from people out in the trenches* [emphasis added] - from people not having any relationship to HR. And that makes sense to me. That's where the work is being done." Finally, when discussing the propensity for veteran nurses to bully novice nurses, P78FP states, "maybe a suit of chainmaille would help keep the knives out of our backs."

Games/sports. References to games and/or sports were the third most cited of the metaphor themes, with just over 10% of all metaphors falling within this category. This metaphor refers to sporting events, competitive sporting behaviors, and game playing. For example, P25FP (training and development site) states "that shift in our society, unfortunately (or fortunately) means the *reshuffling of the economic deck of cards* [emphasis added] to favor those countries who believe in learning for learning, I suspect." Other examples include, "now you can kick around the idea" (P118MP, nursing site), "others could have pitched in to help" (P54FP, nursing site), and "I feel like a square peg in a round hole sometimes" (P77FP, nursing site). During a discussion

on whether to provide internal or external consultancy, P11FP (training and development site) states, “but if you are talking about internal consultants only, then that *may be a different ball game* [emphasis added] where you have no good choices.”

Physical violence. This metaphor category represents nearly 10% of the total use of metaphors. References to physical violence as metaphors include “...when I mentioned doing the taping and evaluating, I was *almost burned in effigy* [emphasis added]” (P1FP, training and development site), “continue to attempt to crucify and generalize” (P25FP, nursing site), “I really don’t much like beating this thing to death (P203MP, mechanical engineering site), “you have to learn to take a punch” (P177MP, nursing site), and “...they feel so unnatural and out of place that dragging them naked through broken glass would be preferential to them” (P2MP, training and development site).

Mechanics/construction. The final of the five major categories involves metaphors that allude to the workings or production of various inanimate objects. For example, during a disagreement about the complexity of trainers’ needs, P2MP (training and development site) states, “if you want to further complicate the plumbing, go right ahead.” Other instances of this category include, “however, if you can get people in your section/committee/etc. on board, it is an effective and handy tool” (P183MP, mechanical engineering site), “you hit the nail right on the head” (P97FP, nursing site), and “there's still *a lot of fine-tuning* [emphasis added] and continuous improvement to do” (P245FP, mechanical engineering site).

Miscellaneous metaphors. Other, rarely used, metaphor categories also emerged, and accounted for less than 20% (altogether) of the total use of metaphors, so they are only briefly mentioned here. First, household items were referenced as metaphors. Examples include, "'able to' means talent and that's one leg of the stool" (P2MP, training and development site), "when one is sitting in one's easy chair of outside consultancy" (P24FP, training and development site), "when I was treated like a piece of trash" (P44FP, nursing site), "goes over everything with a fine tooth comb" (P116MP, nursing site), and "until that time don't throw out dirty water til [*sic*] you have clean" (P5MP, training and development site).

Second, references to children and/or immaturity are used. Examples include, "I'm not saying to baby them" (P72MP, nursing site), "the best-behaved children in the world do not all have tons of the best toys" (P6MP, training and development site), "we are sooooo [*sic*] wet behind the ears" (P114FP, nursing site), and "do not pay staff nurses to babysit with kid gloves" (P101FP, nursing site).

Third, references to the arts include, "that is an important role to play" (P241FP, mechanical engineering site), "observation is merely a broad brush-stroke of past management evaluations" (P6MP, training and development site), "any ideas on how to drum up interest" (P182FP, nursing site), "this topic has to be a side show for some deeper issue" (P11FP, training and development site), "wait for a magician, and continue to hope for magic" (P25FP, training and development site), and "within the capability of his merry band of SMEs" (P3MP, training and development site).

Finally, references to education and schooling occurred, although they were rarely used. Examples of this metaphor include, "so doing his or her homework is about all..." (P3MP), "dot all our I's and cross all the T's" (P148FP), and "secret tips off the book knowledge" (P42FP).

Metaphors and preferential language. Interestingly, some metaphor types run contrary to social gender assumptions. For example, the metaphors of physical violence and games/sports were both utilized at length by female-preferential language users. Likewise, metaphor references to the arts, childhood, and education were heavily represented by MP participants. Explanations and implications of these counter-intuitive results are discussed within Chapter V.

Metaphors and MP/FP interactions. Of all the male- and female-preferential participants who engaged in interactions with one another, nearly 65% of them utilized metaphors as compared to only 47% of overall metaphor use. Female-preferential participants, on average, increase their metaphor usage when interacting with male-preferential participants by about 20%. Male-preferential language participants (when interacting with FP participants) increased metaphor usage by about 6%. The tendency for FP participants to substantially increase the use of metaphors when interacting with MP indicates that it is a communication strategy for them. Discussion and implications of this finding are addressed within the next chapter.

Turning to the individual organizational sites, *all* of the FP participants who interacted with MP participants within the training and development site used metaphors (compared to 65% overall FP use of metaphors in this site). Nearly 70% of this site's

MP participants involved in interactions with FP participants used metaphors (compared to 57% overall). Within the nursing site, nearly 70% of FP participants utilized metaphors when interacting with MP participants (compared to 50% overall). Fifty-six percent of the MP participants who interacted with FP participants utilized metaphors (compared to 53% overall). Finally, half of the FP participants within the mechanical engineering site utilized metaphors when interacting with MP participants (compared to 24% overall). Close to 60% of MP participants who interacted with FP participants utilized metaphors (compared to 50% overall).

Conclusion

This chapter presents key findings from 18 discussion forums (six from each of the three different industry sites discussed in the previous chapter) totaling 294 pages of text and 681 postings. Seven major findings emerged from this study. The first three were general findings that represented and described the whole of the data. They provided context for the last four findings which directly informed the research questions. First, where preferential language is concerned, utilization of modals/hedges and references to emotion were the two most prevalent female-preferential language dimensions. Conversely, opinions and intensive adjectives were the two most used male-preferential language characteristics. The second finding, that female-preferential language users outnumbered male-preferential language users 158 to 66, is noteworthy because preferential language use did not coincide with industry gender statistics. For example, although the field of nursing has a female population of 92%, only 68% of the nursing forum participants used female-preferential language. Most notably, however,

was that, although the field of mechanical engineering is over 94% male, only about 31% of the participants in that site used male-preferential language. The third main finding was that, overall, roughly 20% of the postings were interactions between female-preferential and male-preferential participants (i.e. a female-preferential language user directed a comment to a male-preferential language user or vice versa). This finding varied across industry site with the training and development site containing the most MP/FP interactions. Interestingly, 17 of the 18 forums were initiated by an FP participant.

Next, turning to findings that specifically inform the research questions, the fourth major finding of this study was that the six male-preferential language characteristics (used to determine participant preferential language) contained themes of domination over female-preferential language, and, consequently, over users of female-preferential language. This finding coincides with muted group and co-cultural communication theories in explaining how spoken language operates to mute non-dominant groups. The difference here, however, is that during face-to-face communication there are many ways in which non-dominant groups are muted (e.g. exclusive body language, voice tone and pitch), whereas within written CMC, *text* is the sole means to mute another individual. Moreover, neither muted group theory, nor co-cultural communication theory offer explanations for *how* dominant language mutes non-dominant groups. The current finding provides insight into that omission. Fifth, although only eight participants disclosed their biological sex within their posting(s) (six men, two women), over one quarter of all participants used gender-specific pronouns to

address other participants. Moreover, despite the overwhelming number of FP participants, masculine pronoun use was equal to feminine pronoun use, overall. Interestingly, within interactions between MP participants and FP participants, MP participants used feminine pronouns at the same rate as they did within the general discussion (despite their direct communication with a FP participant). Conversely, FP participants were more than twice as likely to use masculine pronouns during these interactions. Sixth, female-preferential language users who interacted with male-preferential language users engaged mostly in *respectful communication* as a strategy to communicate with the dominant group. Main themes of respectful communication included statements of agreement, compliments to the male-preferential language user, and expressions of thankfulness to the male-preferential language user. According to co-cultural communication theory, this finding aligns with a preferred outcome of assimilation to the dominant group (in this case, male-preferential language users). The communication strategy used least was *confrontation*. Finally, as the coding continued, it became evident that the use of metaphors was a FP communication strategy. Both male-and female-preferential language users made use of metaphors during discussion (53% of all MP and 46% of all FP). However, during interactions between MP participants and FP participants, FP participants increased their metaphor usage by 20%. MP participants increased their usage of metaphors by 6% during MP/FP interactions. The next, and final, chapter discusses these findings for conclusions and implications for HRD theory, research, and practice.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

To review, the purpose of this feminist critical discourse analysis was to uncover whether or not, and how, muteness of female-preferential voice occurs within written organizational computer-mediated communication. Muteness of female-preferential voice refers to a condition of female-preferential language structures that are unrecognizable due to the dominant, masculine, language structure. The existence of muteness, as defined here, is determined by the presence of strategies of dominance by male-preferential (MP) language participants, and strategies of non-dominant communication by female-preferential (FP) language participants, during interactions with each other. Utilizing feminist critical discourse analysis, 18 discussion forums across three professional association web sites were examined for themes of muting. Forums were coded according to 18 gender preferential language dimensions and participants were categorized as female-preferential (FP), male-preferential (MP), or neutral (N). Interactions between FP and MP participants were further analyzed for themes of male-preferential dominance and female-preferential communication strategies/reactions to male-preferential dominance. It was expected that the findings and knowledge produced from this study would bring attention to, and transformation of, the power ingrained within language structures in written organizational communication.

The following research questions guided this study: Is female-preferential muteness evident within written organizational CMC and, if so, how is it muted by male-preferential language? Two sub-questions helped to inform the study: 1) What male-

preferential language processes and strategies are used to establish language dominance, and 2) what female-preferential language communication strategies and reactions are used when responding to male-preferential dominance? Qualitative research methods were employed to answer these questions.

Researcher Reflection

Before providing a discussion and implications of the findings, a reflection on the research process is given to provide transparency of methods and contribute to transferability. This section presents a personal review on the experience in completing data collection and data analysis for the current study. Interpretations, struggles and surprising findings are discussed within this section.

As shown in figure 2 (Appendix D), coding for the 18 language dimensions and nine co-cultural communication strategies overlapped. It was not unusual for a single sentence or passage to have four or five overlapping codes associated with it. As the instrument of analysis, I familiarized myself with the descriptions of the 18 preferential-language dimensions and the 9 co-cultural communication strategies as the founders portrayed them (Thomson & Murachver, and Orbe, respectively). That is, I carefully examined their descriptions and how the founding researchers utilized them within their own studies. With this intimate knowledge, I made coding decisions in conjunction with how the dimensions and strategies were originally formulated.

Despite this understanding, I did come across some passages where I had to exercise liberal interpretation based upon context and previous interactions between participants to code for the MP language dimension *insult*. Although some insults were

blatantly degrading, others were more covert and given with sarcastic undertones. For these instances, I reread the entire forum paying close attention to the participants giving and receiving the potential insult. After rereading the forum, if I was still unsure whether or not to code the comment as an insult, then I opted *not* to code it.

There were two co-cultural communication strategies that I exercised liberal coding on: Avoidance and self-censorship. As described, avoidance was coded when an MP participant directed a comment or question toward an FP participant and the FP participant did not reply. Self-censorship was coded when an MP participant directed a derogatory comment or question to an FP participant and then replied to the MP participant's posting, in general, but not to the derogatory comment. These decisions were made because Orbe's descriptions of self-censorship and avoidance were founded upon face to face interaction and to utilize them within written CMC required researcher interpretation of the spirit of the two strategies.

Aside from struggles in coding, there were some surprises within the findings. For example, although the field of mechanical engineering is highly male-dominant, the mechanical engineering forum participants utilized more FP language than MP language. Yet, the nursing forum participants (members of a highly female-dominant field) were consistent with stereotypical language use in displaying a majority of FP language. Another interesting finding was the heavy use of games/sports metaphors by FP participants. Sports metaphors are consistently cited as one of the most common organizational metaphors (Cleary & Packard, 1992), but they also represent masculine images and were expected to be used by more MP participants than FP participants.

Lastly, it was surprising that the two least used FP language dimensions in the nursing site were the two most used FP language dimensions in the training and development site. Moreover, the two most used FP language dimensions in the nursing site were the two least used FP language dimensions in the training and development site. Combined with the finding that the nursing site had the highest percentage of FP participants and the training and development site had the highest percentage of MP participants, this finding suggests that the language dimensions fall along a continuum of femininity/masculinity. These, and other, findings are discussed in more depth below.

Findings Overview

The research questions were chiefly answered by the findings presented in Chapter IV. Broadly speaking, muting *is* evident within written organizational communication. This conclusion was supported by themes of dominance within male-preferential language dimensions and male-centered address (i.e. masculine pronoun assumptions), and by female-preferential use of non-dominant communication strategies. Thus, the system of spoken language, built and maintained through socialization, that requires certain social groups (e.g. women) to engage in subordinating language dimensions (i.e. female-preferential language) and dominant social groups (e.g. men) to maintain control and dominance through their speech (eliciting male-preferential language) is reproduced through online written communication. Muting occurs through a process of MP language dominance and FP language assimilation. FP language users employ various communication strategies to manage their interactions with users of MP language while operating within the dominant (gendered) language structure.

In regards to MP language dominance, the six features of male-preferential language were used more often by MP participants during MP/FP interactions than they were used during general discussion. Themes from further analysis reveal ways these MP language features are used to establish and maintain power, control, and influence throughout communication with FP language users. For example, the MP language feature most utilized in the current study was the statement of opinions. A definitional description of opinion appears gender neutral, "a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). However, when the context of *how* opinions are used during MP/FP interactions is examined, themes of domination appear. Namely, opinions maintain MP dominance through (mis)representation of opinions as factual knowledge and representing personal experiences as superior evidence of fact. These themes inhibit alternative perspectives and differing experiences from being stated and/or heard. Moreover, the assumption that one's own (dominant) lived experience provides a basis of reality for another individual's (non-dominant) situation ignores the social power differences present within a system of cultural hegemony. Opinions shaped in these ways, where the foundational assumptions are non-debatable 'truths,' provide no space for alternative (non-dominant) perspectives.

Another form of MP dominance was accomplished through the use of gendered pronouns. Despite more than 80% of the total postings being initiated by a FP participant, and the majority of FP participants, use of masculine pronouns (e.g. he, him, his) was on par with use of feminine pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers). This finding is

partially due to the lingering propensity to reference generic and hypothetical persons as male. However, further analysis revealed that, within FP/MP interactions, MP participants used feminine pronouns at the same rate as they did within the general discussion (despite their direct communication with an FP participant). Moreover, when MP participants interacted with FP participants, they tended to use more masculine pronouns. Conversely, FP participants were more than twice as likely to use masculine pronouns during MP/FP interactions as they were in general discussion. This finding suggests the tendency to refer to specific individuals whose sex is unknown as male. Whether using masculine pronouns generically or specifically, to default with male-centric, female-excluding references maintains a male-dominant language structure and mutes female language.

In regards to FP language assimilation and communication strategies, during MP/FP interactions FP participants engaged in the nine determinable co-cultural communication strategies set forth by Orbe (1996; 1998) with preference to respectful communication (attempts to appear non-threatening), mirroring (attempts to mimic dominant group communication style), and idealized communication (promotion of utopian society; emphasizes and celebrates similarities). All three of these strategies operate with the preferred outcome of assimilation and a desire to fit in with the dominant group. Of the three preferred outcomes that Orbe (1996) describes, assimilation involves embracing of dominant structures, values, and prescribed role behaviors by the non-dominant group member. In contrast, the other two preferred outcomes (separation and accommodation) allow for the retention of one's unique

cultural identity. Thus, enmeshed in a language system of domination that mutes their voice, most FP language users engage in communication strategies that serve to reiterate their muteness through a loss of identity by assimilation.

Another communication strategy (distinct from Orbe's) that FP language users employed during FP/MP interactions was the increased reliance on metaphors as compared to their general postings. Roughly half of MP participants and half of FP participants used metaphors. However, during MP/FP interactions, FP participants' use of metaphors increased by 20%. This substantial increase in metaphor usage suggests that FP language users rely more on abstract themes and images to convey thoughts, ideas, and opinions during interactions with MP language users than they do during general discussion. Thus, metaphor use emerged as a communication strategy employed by FP participants during dominant group interactions.

Interestingly, the type of some of the metaphors used was contradictory to preferential language stereotypes. For example, metaphors depicting physical violence and games/sports were heavily used by FP participants, whereas, metaphor references to the arts, childhood, and education were heavily represented by MP participants. Despite these counter-stereotypical findings, the majority of metaphors were in reference to organics and used primarily by FP participants. This metaphor category includes references to plants, animals, food/eating, the human body, and the earth's natural elements (with food/eating and the human body being the largest sub categories.

The remainder of this chapter begins with a reflection on further explanations for the seven findings that were discussed at length in the last chapter and briefly

summarized above. Findings are grouped into analytic categories associated with the research questions. Following this discussion are overall conclusions, implications for theory, research, and practice, and recommendations for future research.

Analytic Categories of Findings

This section classifies the seven findings into three analytic categories in conjunction with the research questions. First, a discussion regarding preferential language findings by industry site is highlighted. This discussion summarizes and provides further explanation for the first three findings from Chapter IV. Second, strategies for maintaining male-preferential dominance are highlighted. This discussion summarizes and provides further explanation for the fourth and fifth findings from Chapter IV. Finally, strategies of female-preferential communication during interactions with male-preferential language users are summarized. This discussion provides a review and further explanation for the sixth and seventh findings from Chapter IV.

Preferential Language and Industry Site

As discussed in the previous chapter, of the 246 individuals who participated in the 18 discussion forums, 158 utilized FP language, 66 used MP language, and 22 were classified as neutral. An explanation for the overwhelming majority of female-preferential language participants is that online environments appeal more to users of this style of communication than to users of male-preferential language. This explanation assumes, as in broader contexts, that women were the primary users of FP language and men were the primary users of MP language, and supports research suggesting that online environments appeal more to women than to men. As Anderson

and Haddad (2005) state during their research on women's and men's participation in online courses, "females experience greater perceived deep learning in online than in face-to-face courses, and [the] expression of voice appears to contribute to this outcome" (p. 3). Additionally, in researching gender participation in face-to-face versus online course environments, Caspi, Chajut, and Saporta (2008) found that "men over-proportionally spoke at the face-to-face classroom whereas women over-proportionally posted messages in the web-based conference" (p. 718). This preference of online communication seems to be especially true for women in non-traditional occupations who, as Donelan, Herman, Kear, and Kirkup (2009) found "are successfully using online networks to find support, advice and collaboration from women working in similar environments" (p. 92). This coincides with the current study's finding where over 50% of the mechanical engineering site (an occupational field that is nearly 95% male; U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Nontraditional Occupations for Women, 2010) utilized female-preferential language.

Although this study does not make assumptions about participants' biological sex, in general CMC contexts, the majority of female-preferential language users are women, and the majority of male-preferential language users are men (Leaper & Robnett, 2011). Indeed, the research that coined the term gender-preferential language within the context of CMC developed the 18 gendered language dimensions through analysis of men's and women's written online text; thus forming the categories of male-preferential and female preferential language, respectively. However, this does not ignore the possibility of female-preferential language users who are not women. As this

study argues, without physical and auditory cues to signal sex, text alone provides gender cues to infer sex. This coincides with previous research reveals that language style cues are more likely to be used in inferring gender within CMC than screen names, or even names given in signatures (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). Therefore, any user of female-preferential language, regardless of sex, may be muted online. As such, it is with caution that the explanation for high levels of FP participants due to women's partiality to online environments is offered.

Regardless of sex, however, the findings support a general notion that users of FP language, who vary widely by work industry, are seeking support and connections through voluntary professional associations within their career field. The focus of this study was to determine whether muting between dominant (MP) and non-dominant (FP) groups occurs within organizational CMC, but with the overwhelming number of FP participants, MP/FP interactions only totaled 22% of total interactions. Given the large number of postings, this percentage sufficed in answering the research questions, but it highlights potential follow-up research. For example, if MP/FP (dominant/non-dominant) interactions are fewer online, does muting occur less often? That is, are online environments a place where non-dominant groups can go to have voice and develop identity? Are there forms of FP/FP (non-dominant/non-dominant) muting that occur?

Within organizational contexts, success largely depends on traditionally masculine, agentic, behaviors (Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearns, 2008). Non-dominant groups, then, must embrace masculine norms and behaviors to enjoy career success.

However, social norm violation elicits negative sanctions against norm violators from dominant and non-dominant groups, alike. Even in online environments, where social norms are of less focus than in face-to-face interactions (Gressgård, 2011), "traditional gender stereotypes can be reified [including] when people believe they are freely choosing their on-line gender identity in non-traditional ways" (Herring, 2005, p. 10). Thus, organizational CMC at large may not provide a social structure where non-dominant groups can be free from muting. Herring (2005) highlights this importance of CMC context by stating:

> Over time, computer-mediated groups develop *norms* of practice regarding 'how things are done' and what constitutes socially desirable behavior... [These] norms vary considerably from context to context... [And] point to the importance of communication *purpose* – recreational, professional, pedagogical, creative, etc. (p. 10)

Moreover, where the participants in the current study were members of a *voluntary* discussion, most organizational CMC is not freely chosen. For example, employees are expected to utilize email, attend web conferences, and make use of intra-office instant message (IM) systems. Many global organizations assign employees to virtual teams that come together for a task and then are disassembled. Thus, voluntary, and/or recreational, CMC may provide more space for non-dominant groups to gain voice, but within the male dominant structures of organizations, it is not likely. Furthermore, despite the refuge some online environments may provide non-dominant groups, the

requirement to own a computer with internet connection to have a voice continues to marginalize and subordinate these groups.

Regarding the 18 gender preferential language dimensions (see Appendix A for a detailed description of each), modals/hedges (FP) were used the most, followed closely by opinions (MP). Together, these two language dimensions accounted for over 35% of all the preferential language use across the 18 discussion forums. However, looking at each site, specifically, greatest use of language dimensions differed from the overall results. Within the nursing site, participants' referred to emotions (FP) the most, followed by the use of intensive adverbs (FP). This site had the highest FP participants, lowest MP participants, and was the least MP/FP interactive of the three sites.

Within the mechanical engineering site, however, compliments (FP) were used the most, followed by opinions (MP). This site had the lowest FP participants and the highest neutral participants of the three sites. Lastly, the training and development site used references to previous comments (FP) the most, followed by statements of disagreeing (MP). This site's participants used preferential language more than the other two sites (i.e. had the highest usage of 12 of the 18 language dimensions). Additionally, the training and development site had the highest percentage of MP participants and was the most MP/FP interactive.

Results seem to diverge from research that suggests, despite gendered language preference, the *subject* of discussion elicits more, or less, use of MP or FP language from participants. For example, Thomson (2006) found that female topics of discussion brought out more FP language, specifically more personal information was given and

reference to previous comments were cited; while male topics of discussion brought out more MP language, specifically opinions and intense adjectives. Within the current study, however, the nursing site not only had the largest number of FP participants, but also the most female-oriented subject matter (e.g. relationships with mentors and color of work attire). Yet, it was the training and development site that accounted for the most overall FP language. The topics within the training and development site were relatively neutral (e.g. incentives for in-house subject matter experts to train and whether narrating on-screen text facilitates, or hinders, learning). Interestingly, the training and development site had the highest percentage of MP participants and was the most MP/FP interactive (a context where high levels of MP language is expected), and the nursing site had the *lowest* percentage of MP participants and was the *least* MP/FP interactive (a context where high levels of FP language is expected). Moreover, FP participants used more MP language during MP/FP interactions than did FP participants in general discussion; thus, it is increasingly interesting that the training and development site had the most FP language dimensions.

There are a couple of possible explanations for this counter-intuitive result. First, on average, postings within the training and development site were nearly three times longer than postings by the nursing site participants. The longer passages allowed for greater opportunity of gender-preferential language to present itself. In conjunction with this, the training and development site also contained the greatest percentage of MP language. Thus, although the training and development site contained the fewest number of participants (roughly half the amount of the mechanical engineering site, and

only a quarter the size of the nursing site), the lengthy passages and ongoing interaction facilitated data rich in both male- and female-preferential language.

A second explanation for why these results appear counter-intuitive in relation to previous work may involve the *type* of female-preferential language most used by each site. Although Thomson and Murachver (2001) and Thomson (2006) do not scale the language dimensions as more, or less, feminine or masculine, it is likely not an accident that the two most-used FP language dimensions in the nursing forum (references to emotions and intensive adverbs) are the two *least*-used FP language dimensions in the training and development forum; and the two most-used FP language dimensions in the training and development forum (reference to previous comments and requests for information) are the two *least*-used FP language dimensions within the nursing site. A better understanding is needed regarding whether and how each language dimension is positioned on a gendered scale of highly feminine to highly masculine. At an initial glance, the most-used FP language dimensions used by the nursing site (least-used by the training and development site) appear to be highly feminine (references to emotions and intensive adverbs); whereas the most-used FP language dimensions by the training and development site (least-used by the nursing site) appear to be more gender-neutral (reference to previous comments and requests for information). Thus, despite the high MP participation, high MP/FP involvement (which elicits more MP language from FP participants), and relatively neutral topics, the reason for such high FP language present within the training and development forum may be related to the use of FP language dimensions which are located closer to a neutral position on a gendered language scale.

In conjunction with the notion of scaling the 18 language dimensions, is the opportunity to better categorize individuals as favoring male-, female-, or neutral-preferential language. The current study provided no accounting for individuals who used only slightly more/less of either FP or MP language. That is, unless a participant used exactly equal amounts of FP and MP language dimensions, they were categorized as preferring one or the other. This means, for example, that individuals who had mean frequencies of MP and FP language that were close (but not equal) were placed in the same preferential category as individuals who had widely divergent MP and FP mean frequencies. Scaling the 18 language dimensions would provide for greater accuracy in delineating preferential language by participant.

Interestingly, out of the 18 gender-preferential language dimensions, the mechanical engineering site used a FP feature (compliments) the most. This finding also seems to contradict research that suggests, despite gendered language preference, the *subject* of discussion elicits more, or less, use of MP or FP language from participants. As mentioned in Chapter II, Janssen and Murachver (2004) found that the topic of genetic engineering drew more male-preferential language while the topic of romantic partnerships drew more female-preferential language. However, as speculated, if women in non-traditional career fields are turning to online support from other women in those fields, and women are the primary users of FP language, then, despite the masculine subject matter, there will likely be more FP language within these forums.

Strategies of Maintaining Male-Preferential Dominance

This analytic category reviews findings #4 and #5 from the previous chapter. These findings illustrate ways in which MP language maintains dominance over FP language during MP/FP interactions. As discussed, MP participants involved in interactions with FP participants employed more male-preferential language features than did MP participants in general discussion. As such, a deeper analysis of the six male-preferential language characteristics revealed themes of domination. The three most prevalent MP language dimensions (opinions, intensive adjectives, and disagreement) and their themes are reviewed below.

Additionally, despite the low number of participants who disclosed their biological sex, over one-quarter of the total participants utilized gender-specific pronouns. Furthermore, although over 80% of the discussion postings were initiated by an FP participant, and there being an overwhelming amount of FP participants in comparison with MP participants, use of masculine pronouns (e.g. he, him, his) was on par with use of feminine pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers). Explanations and interpretations for this finding are discussed below.

Male-preferential language dominance. The most prevalent male-preferential language features were opinions, intensive adjectives, and statements of disagreeing. Interestingly, the two themes derived from the use of intensive adjectives were: 1) emphasizing opinions, and 2) emphasizing disagreements. Thus, intensive adjectives were often used in tandem with other male-preferential language features thereby reinforcing their dominance. The two main themes representing the use of opinions

were to represent one's personal experiences as factual evidence and to state an opinion as though it were a fact rather than one's personal perspective. The two main themes from statements of disagreeing were dispute with another participant and criticism of the structure or status quo of the subject matter.

These findings coincide with existing research on ways men attempt to exclude women online. For example, Herring, Johnson, & DiBenedetto (1995) looked at women's reactions to men's silencing strategies in online groups where the women were either feminist-influenced or were not feminist-influenced. At first, within both group discussions, women contributed to the conversation at an equal rate as the men did, but then:

> Male members reacted... by employing a variety of silencing strategies: first they avoided addressing the women's concerns by dismissing them as trivial or by intellectualizing the discussion away from its original focus; then they erupted into anger and accusations when the women persisted in posting messages on the topic; and finally they co-opted and redefined the terms of the discourse as a means of regaining control. (Herring, et al., 1995, p. 68)

Although MP participants did not 'erupt' in anger within the current study, they nevertheless trivialized FP participants' statements and often co-opted and redefined the direction of the topic. Means by which MP participants maintained control are evidenced by the greater use of MP language during FP/MP interactions and within the *ways* these language features were used. For example, when stating opinions to a FP participant, MP participants represented personal perspectives and experiences as

superior evidence of fact. This not only overstates one's knowledge on a subject, but it inhibits alternative perspectives and differing experiences from being heard. Moreover, the assumption that one's own (dominant) lived experience provides a basis of reality for another individual's (non-dominant) situation ignores the social power differences present within a system of cultural hegemony.

Additionally, FP participants, enmeshed in a system of socialization to use language that appears nonthreatening, cloak their opinions and perspectives in modals, hedges, and other grammatically subordinating language, thus *understating* their knowledge. This sets up situations where MP participants can easily disagree with, and trivialize, FP participants' perspectives. For example, during a discussion on the inclusion of certain quality standards dictated by the mechanical engineering site, P241FP states:

> Anyway, it is quite clear that WPS and WPQ are two different things and each have their own sets of essential variables and limitations. But QW423 is written to loosely mean that a welder qualified with a certain P-No. is also qualified to weld a whole range of other P-Nos. I am writing this reply from home but if my memory is not failing me, that paragraph or its sub-paragraph clearly states that a welder qualified with P-1 is also qualified to weld P-1 through P-11, P-31 and P-41 through P-49. *Experienced code users will tell the committee this isn't necessarily true* [emphasis added].

P241FP ends this posting by stating, "Perhaps you gentlemen can raise this issue with [quality standards chairman] and hopefully when he chairs the next meeting; some

shortcoming in that paragraph may be addressed." P241FP states opposition to the inclusion of a quality standard within the association's guidelines. Qualifiers and subordinating clauses (e.g. "if my memory is not failing me" and "perhaps you gentlemen") minimize P241FP's conviction of this opinion. In response, P242MP states:

> The clause that you feel should be removed is used daily all over the world and it's [*sic*] intention is to limit the amount of tests required in the same way a WPS on a P1 classification covers a huge amount of base materials. It is totally impractical to have a procedure for every base material and it is totally impractical to test a welder on every different base material he may weld on.

P242MP trivializes P241FP's perspective by stating the clause is "used daily all over the world" and that an alternative is "totally impractical." This response attempts to finalize the discussion by allowing no room for debate or alternative suggestions. As a result, P241FP did not reply (an avoidance strategy).

Pronouns and male-preferential dominance. The detection of overall pronoun use in this study may be attributed to the increased use of them within CMC as compared to speech or other forms of writing (Yates, 1996). This section reviews the findings for overall pronoun use by MP and FP participants, followed by a review of the findings for overall gender pronoun use by MP and FP participants, and concludes with a discussion on gendered pronoun use in MP/FP interactions.

Regarding general tense of pronoun use:

> Personal pronouns show the writer's relationship to an audience. Thus, first person plural pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' may express solidarity with the group... (Arguello, et al., 2006, p.959)

Within the current study, FP participants utilized, on average, 3.00 first person plural pronouns (e.g. we, us) per person. MP participants used, on average, 2.23 first person plural pronouns. In contrast, third person pronouns (e.g. he, she, they, them) "may differentiate an in group from an out group" (Arguello, et al., 2006, p. 959). In the current study, FP participants used, on average, 0.92 third person pronouns per person. MP participants used, on average, 0.48 third person pronouns per person. The use of first person plural pronouns more than three times as often as third person pronouns by FP participants is consistent with the FP language feature of statements emphasizing similarity or solidarity. Where third person pronouns are concerned, FP participants relied heavily on these during MP/FP interactions (discussed below) which may reveal the tendency to favor separation as a preferred outcome (i.e. use avoidance and/or self-assured communication strategies) when interacting with MP participants.

Interestingly, MP participants used first person plural pronouns more than four times as often as they used third person pronouns. Although this seems contrary to the MP language feature of emphasizing differences, previous research shows that there is little variation between male and female use of first person plural pronouns (Savicki, Lingenfelter, & Kelley, 1996). Another explanation for this finding is that discussion forums were part of a *professional* association within each participants' career field. Masculine identities are defined heavily by status indicators (e.g. profession, salary;

Eddleston & Powell, 2006). Thus, within the context of industry topics among colleagues, MP participants may express more in-group references within their postings than they would in a more generic, or recreational, discussion.

Turning to the use of gender-specific pronouns, although the majority of participants were FP, the majority of the discussion postings were initiated by a FP participant, and FP participants utilized more pronouns overall, the use of masculine pronouns (e.g. he, him, his) was on par with use of feminine pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers). This finding is partially due to the lingering propensity to reference generic and hypothetical persons as male; which coincides with previous research showing that women are equally likely as men to use the pronoun *he* when talking figuratively (Koppel, Argamon, & Shimoni, 2002). It should be noted that, although rare, there were a few instances of referring to a generic person as female (this solely occurred in the nursing forums). Generic persons referenced as either female or male, however, may be more representative of industry stereotypes than universal 'male = people' or 'female = people' references. As mentioned, the nursing and mechanical engineering fields are exceptionally gender polarized. In concurrence with these demographics, generic (hypothetical) persons mentioned in the nursing forum tended to be referenced as female; whereas generic (hypothetical) persons mentioned in the mechanical engineering forum tended to be referenced as male. Interestingly, both MP and FP participants in the training and development forum were inclined to use gender inclusive pronoun references (e.g. he/she, his or hers).

Yet, despite these explanations, during interactions with FP participants, MP participant use of feminine pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers) did not rise. Additionally, MP participant use of masculine pronouns (e.g. him, his, he) *did* rise. A potential explanation for this finding is the difficulty for highly masculine men to adopt FP language. As Fitzpatrick and colleagues (1995) found:

> Men, especially traditional ones, have trouble adopting the female-preferential style when speaking to other women... Women do not have this difficulty, in that they appear capable of converging toward the male style and are able to adjust during conversation to the particular stance of a given partner. (p. 35)

This finding is consistent with the current study in that FP participants were more than twice as likely to use masculine pronouns during these interactions as they were in general discussion. This finding may be the result of a propensity to use masculine address when the sex of a person is not likely known. Merritt and Kok (1995) found that, when reading a passage from an author with an unknown gender, both men and women adopt a "people = male" (p.145) bias. The 'he/man' approach, according to Martyna (1980) "involves the use of male terms to refer to males and generically to human beings" (p. 483). This approach to language received heavy criticism in the 1970s and 1980s by feminist scholars and writers. There was a call for female-inclusiveness that eliminated ambiguity and sexist language. However, opposition to a hegemonic system is a protracted struggle. Findings here suggest many strides have been made since the 1980s (e.g. many inclusive references to "he/she"), but that MP language users still tend to resist female inclusiveness during MP/FP interactions. Additionally, highly gender-

polarized environments may lead to gender assumptions that exclude members of the group.

Strategies of Female-Preferential Communication

The section above addressed ways in which MP language and users of MP language exert dominance and maintain power within organizational CMC. This section turns to ways in which FP language users respond to this dominance during interactions with MP language users. First, findings from the analysis done on FP participant postings during MP/FP interactions with Orbe's co-cultural communication strategies are highlighted. As mentioned, respectful communication, mirroring, and idealized communication were the most utilized. Although self-assured communication was used with similar frequency as idealized communication, due to its dual placement on Orbe's matrix (within the assertive separation and assertive accommodation cells), it was determined questionable due to ambiguity and likely division of references.

Second, after noticing the recurrence of metaphors throughout all of the discussion forums analysis into how metaphors were used across preferential language, organizational site, and during MP/FP interactions was conducted. Analysis of metaphor frequency and metaphor type across preferential language and organizational sites delineated who was using metaphors and how they were being applied, and it gave insight into strategies of communication by both dominant and non-dominant groups during interactions with each other. Although overall, slightly over half of all MP participants utilized metaphors, and slightly less than half of all FP participants utilized metaphors, FP participants, on average, increase their metaphor usage during MP/FP

interactions by about 20%; however MP participants increased metaphor usage by about 6% during these interactions.

Co-cultural communication strategies. Of the nine determinable co-cultural communication strategies, respectful communication was the most utilized by FP participants during FP/MP interactions. This strategy involves stroking the ideals of dominant group members and employing various tactics to appear non-threatening. The main themes from this strategy were agreement, thankfulness, and compliments. Two of those themes overlap with FP language dimensions (agreeing and compliments).

The *respectful communication* strategy resides within the *nonassertive* (communication style) *assimilation* (preferred outcome) cell of Orbe's co-cultural communication matrix (see table 6 in Appendix H). Within Orbe's 3x3 matrix, the nonassertive assimilation communication strategies are, ostensibly, the least self-actualized of them. That is, the nonassertive communication strategies inhibit non-dominant perspectives and expressions, and promote non-confrontational, adaptive behaviors that put the needs of others above the needs of oneself. Thus, *nonassertive assimilation* strategies seek to maintain the status quo and assimilate to the norms and ideals of the dominant group. Within the current study, nearly one-half of the FP participants who interacted with MP participants used nonassertive assimilation communication strategies during those interactions.

Additionally, the most dominance-challenging cell within Orbe's co-cultural communication strategies, *aggressive accommodation*, contains the least utilized co-cultural communication strategy within the current study: Confrontational tactics.

Confrontational tactics are aggressive (i.e. belligerently expressive), yet accommodative (i.e. keeps self-identity intact). Thus, one of the *least* assertive and self-actualizing co-cultural communication strategies (respectful communication) was the *most* used by FP participants; and the *most* dominance-challenging strategy (confrontational tactics) was the *least* used. This suggests that FP participants, when interacting with MP participants, style their communication as encouraging, supportive, non-confrontational, and adaptive to MP language. With regard to respectful communication, this is accomplished through engaging in compliments, being agreeable, and expressing thankfulness; all of which have a focus on the recipient's (i.e. MP participant's) well-being. This finding may be the result of female socialization to act communally. That is, those who use female-preferential language are likely expected to help and encourage others and nurture relationships (Eagly & Koenig, 2006). This gender role takes the focus off of one's own needs and places it on another's. Therefore, FP language users, while encountering MP strategies of maintaining dominance (discussed above), tend to respond with communication strategies that support MP dominance, thus furthering their muteness. That is, enmeshed in a language system of domination that mutes their voice, many FP language users engage in communication strategies that serve to reiterate their muteness through a loss of identity by assimilation.

The notion of how social roles are performed in response to dominant groups within organizational CMC has implications for compounding race and gender when researching muting processes. For example, Parker (2002) interviewed African American female executives for themes of communication strategies within dominant

group cultures and found “a combination of direct and indirect or avoidance strategies that the executives used to adapt to, resist, or transform perceived challenges in their workplace interactions” (p. 254). When interacting with white males, Parker’s participants experienced interpersonal conflict (utilized unassertive communication or face-to-face negotiation), having ideas co-opted or ignored (utilized humor to co-opt gender bias, face-to-face negotiation, and building a ‘tough’ reputation), and being excluded from communication networks (utilized confrontation, developing ties with insiders, or recreating networks). Future research is needed to determine whether and how these communication strategies are enacted within organizational CMC.

Metaphors. Metaphors emerged as an additional FP communication strategy. Slightly less than half of all FP participants utilized metaphors in general discussion, but they increased their metaphor usage during MP/FP interactions by about 20%. Whereas, overall, slightly more than half of the MP participants used metaphors in general discussion, and MP participants increased metaphor usage only by about 6% during these MP/FP interactions. This suggests that, when interacting with the dominant group, FP participants draw heavily on metaphors to explain their thoughts and make their points. These metaphors appear to be a communication strategy when a non-dominant group member does not feel as though their own (literal) explanations will be heard or understood.

Three main types of metaphors were uncovered: Organic, military and games/sports. Where FP participant usage during MP/FP interactions is concerned, organic metaphors were the most cited, followed by military metaphors, and the third

highest metaphor use were themes of games/sports. The organic category was quite large with subcategories (e.g. plants, animals, food, natural elements, the body), which may be partially responsible for why it was the most cited type. Indeed, both MP and FP participants utilized organic metaphors more than any other type.

Of the top three metaphor categories, organic metaphors were the only ones that did not involve a struggle to win something. The latter two metaphor types, however (military and sports/games), are metaphors most often utilized within organizations (Cleary & Packard, 1992). For example, organizational *missions, attacking* a problem, *striking out*, and *killing* an idea "are so common that their implications are rarely considered by organization members. Many of these metaphors may support and enhance inappropriate intraorganizational and personal competition and conflict" (Cleary & Packard, 1992, p. 232-233). This finding supports research that suggests FP participants can easily adapt their speech to accommodate the opposite gender (Fitzpatrick, Mulac, & Dindia, 1995). That is, during MP/FP interactions, FP participants easily utilize masculine, sex-typed, metaphors (which are common organizational references) to convey their message. This may be an adaptive strategy for non-dominant group members who hope to avoid 'inarticulateness,' as Ardener suggests non-dominant groups struggle with while interacting within a social world of experiencing subordination. This finding is also representative of a mirroring (assimilation) communication strategy that aims to embrace dominant group norms by reducing non-dominant characteristic differences.

Despite greater inclusion of women in the military and the strides women's professional sports have made, references to war, battle, competition, and other aggressive activities are highly masculinized and perpetuate gender bias within organizations (Koller, 2004a). Furthermore, in regards to the prevalence of military references, by "combining two archetypes of hegemonic masculinity, the soldier and the businessman, linguistic, discursive, cognitive and socio-economic practices related to business can be regarded as characterized by that hegemonic masculinity" (Koller, 2004b, p. 17). Within the masculine and competitive environment of organizations, military and sports metaphors (both encompassing masculine and competitive attributes) have dominated organizational artifacts, development initiatives, and leadership references (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Koller, 2004a,b).

The discussion above provides insight regarding the communication strategies used by FP participants during interactions with MP participants. To review, FP participants engaged in the nine (determinable) co-cultural communication strategies during FP/MP interactions; with the greatest tendency to assimilation strategies which have the goal of enculturation into dominant group behaviors and norms. Additionally, two of the top three utilized metaphor categories by FP participants are representative of the hegemonic masculinity that organizations embrace. These findings suggest that, although previous research illustrates areas for FP inclusion within online environments, organizational CMC maintains masculine dominance. Next, a discussion on the implications for HRD theory, research, and practice and recommendations for future research conclude the chapter.

Implications and Recommendations

The three analytic categories discussed above (preferential language and industry site, strategies of maintaining male-preferential dominance, and strategies of female-preferential communication) together create a process of how female-preferential language is muted within written organizational CMC. The current study supports research that shows how individuals who utilize female-preferential language (ostensibly, women) seek support and learning through online environments (Donelan, et al., 2009). This contention is supported, most notably, by the mechanical engineering site, whose industry is largely populated by men, but had a majority of FP participants. However, in line with this research, the current findings offer insight into a gendered social system that does not provide an all-compassing life environment of support and learning for non-dominant groups. That is, despite the refuge some online environments may provide non-dominant groups, the requirement to own a computer with internet connection in order to have a voice continues to marginalize and subordinate these groups.

Individuals utilizing male-preferential language maintain dominance through strategies including exaggerating their knowledge base, trivializing FP participant's experiences and opinions, and refraining from addressing individuals with female-inclusive words (e.g. she, her, hers). As such FP participants engage in various communication strategies when interacting with MP participants. In particular, FP participants mostly utilize respectful communication when conversing with MP participants. This nonassertive assimilation strategy of communication is the least self-

actualized because of its characteristic inhibition, putting the needs of the recipient above one's own needs, and its goal of fitting in with the dominant structure. Additionally, FP participants turn to metaphors when interacting with MP participants. Although FP preferred metaphors strayed from the typical organizational themes of fighting and competition, the latter two of the top three (military and sports) remained prominently used by FP participants within MP/FP interactions. The increased use of all metaphors during these interactions for FP participants suggests that FP individuals entrust images and symbols of speech rather than their literal explanations.

Thus, despite the lack of visual and auditory social cues available within written organizational CMC, muteness of non-dominant groups is still present. Furthermore, muting is a *process* between dominant and non-dominant groups. That is, it does not simply occur in isolation, it operates within a system of gendered language norms, social roles, and expectations where dominant groups are privileged and non-dominant groups are socialized to sustain that privileged status quo. The rest of this chapter explores implications for organizational and HRD theory, research, and practice.

HRD Theory

The findings of this research highlight the need for organizational and HRD theories to move beyond their masculine foundations by including female-relevant principles. For example, Bierema (2001) highlights the masculine bias in career development theories such as trait-factor approaches (e.g. Holland, 1966; Parsons, 1909), which "perpetuate social role and sex stereotyping and assume that women have equal opportunity to explore matches between their personalities and work

environments" (p. 55); and life span – life space approach (Super, 1953) which assumes a linear career progression which most women, charged with child-rearing, do not follow. As a result of such masculine career trajectories, women may feel forced to choose between career goals and personal/family goals. That is, to succeed in organizations, women must embrace a masculine-like career path.

Women who elect this path face challenges to learning along the way. As Bierema (2001) states, "women respond to their social contexts as learners and learn different ways of responding to oppression... a key learning issue for women at work is forging an identity in a male-dominated world" (p. 56). The findings from this study, however, suggest that, even through CMC (where social context is limited), non-dominant groups engage in communication strategies that minimize and stifle their identity while embracing dominant group norms, thus enforcing masculine dominance in professional online settings. Therefore, calls for theoretical change without significant non-dominant group buy-in will likely stall without taking off (to use a stereotypical masculine metaphor); or, calls for theoretical change without significant non-dominant group buy-in will likely be shelved or swept under the rug (to use a stereotypical feminine metaphor).

This study also calls for the refinement of muted group and co-cultural communication theories for applicability to computer-mediated environments. The current study supported the use of co-cultural communication strategies, but highlights the use of strategies that are not conscious efforts to communicate (i.e. metaphor usage). Where Orbe's strategies illuminate tactics non-dominant groups are aware of using, the

theory fails to address non-dominant communication strategies that individuals are using, but are likely unaware of.

In conjunction with this notion of theory refinement, the current study provided no accounting for individuals who used only slightly more/less of either FP or MP language. Scaling the 18 language dimensions would provide for greater accuracy in delineating preferential language by participant. That is, of the 12 FP language characteristics, are some more stereotypically feminine than others? Are there MP language dimensions that are used more (or less) by traditional, sex-typed, men? Refining the 18 gender preferential language dimensions to include answers to such questions allows for greater accuracy in determining language preference.

HRD Research

Where this study provides support for the muteness of FP voice in organizational CMC, it also opens the door to numerous avenues for future research. First, as mentioned, Orbe's theory or co-cultural communication focuses on the non-dominant communication strategies with which individuals are aware that they engage. Future research is needed to determine the multiple other ways in which non-dominant groups struggle for voice. One such way found in this study is the use of metaphors by FP language users. Research demonstrates that metaphor use (Ortiz, 2010) and metaphor understanding (Stöver, 2011) involve subconscious cognitive processing. Thus, there are potential other subconscious communication strategies that non-dominant groups utilize during interactions with dominant group members that are yet to be realized.

Moreover, the ability to comprehend metaphors as they were intended provides another avenue of research. That is, do MP and FP participants perceive metaphors similarly?

Second, although this study provides support for muting within organizational discussion forums, it cannot speak to other forms of organizational CMC (e.g. email). As mentioned, the discussion forums analyzed in this study were from voluntary professional associations. Thus, individuals who participated within the forums sought out the forums and chose to post within them. Within a typical workplace setting, participation in organizational CMC is less voluntary and more a responsibility of the job. It follows that there may be alternative strategies by non-dominant groups for communication with dominant groups through these other mediums. Moreover, there may also be alternative dominant strategies serving to mute non-dominant groups within these mediums that are not highlighted within the current study.

Lastly, because the 18 language dimensions were developed based upon men's and women's language use, it stands to reason that preferential language varies according to the sex demographic of career industry. However, as seen within the current study, the highly male-populated field of mechanical engineering provided forums with individuals utilizing more FP language than MP language. As mentioned, this finding may be due to the influx of women in male-dominated career fields seeking online support. However, it highlights the need for more research into the contexts of preferential language. For example, is preferential language use specific to career field? If so, why is it 'opposite' in fields? What role does national and organizational culture play in determining preferential language? Are there other demographic factors leading

to preferential language use that current research is overlooking? Perhaps biological sex is not the primary determinant of preferential-language; perhaps it lies within other contextual and cultural determinants. Investigation into these, and similar, issues builds on our current understanding of preferential language use, organizational communication, and the muting processes that occur which continue to privilege dominant groups over non-dominant groups.

HRD Practice

Similar findings of learning obstructions are present within online educational contexts. For example, when researching online course discussion forums for gender differences in participation and language style Guiller and Durndell (2007) found that:

> Males were more likely to use authoritative language and to respond negatively in interactions, than females. On the other hand, females were more likely to explicitly agree and support others and make more personal and emotional contributions, than males. The results suggest that gendered power differentials may carry over into online contexts, which has implications for the use of CMC in education. (p. 2240)

These findings have direct implications for online organizational initiatives (e.g. e-learning, training, mentoring, virtual teams). Organizations are turning more and more to cost-saving online environments in order to conduct business (Rollett, Lux, Strohmaier, Dösinger, & Tochtermann, 2007). However, many HRD training initiatives are assigned to women for the purpose of 'fixing,' or facilitate a change in their work behavior, rather than to advance their career. For example, Howell, Carter, & Scheid (2002) found that human resource training programs, "did not increase the women's skills or their ability to move up in the organization but instead concentrated on creating the right kind of worker" (p. 118). Thus, organizational career development initiatives for women have, at their foundation, "the goal to turn real women into homologues of men" (Höpfl, 2002, p. 17). Similarly, human resource development seminar groups target women when sending training brochures promising to help 'solve' women's 'problems' in the workplace. For example, the following training 'opportunity' (figure 1) was delivered to my home address on February 3, 2012:

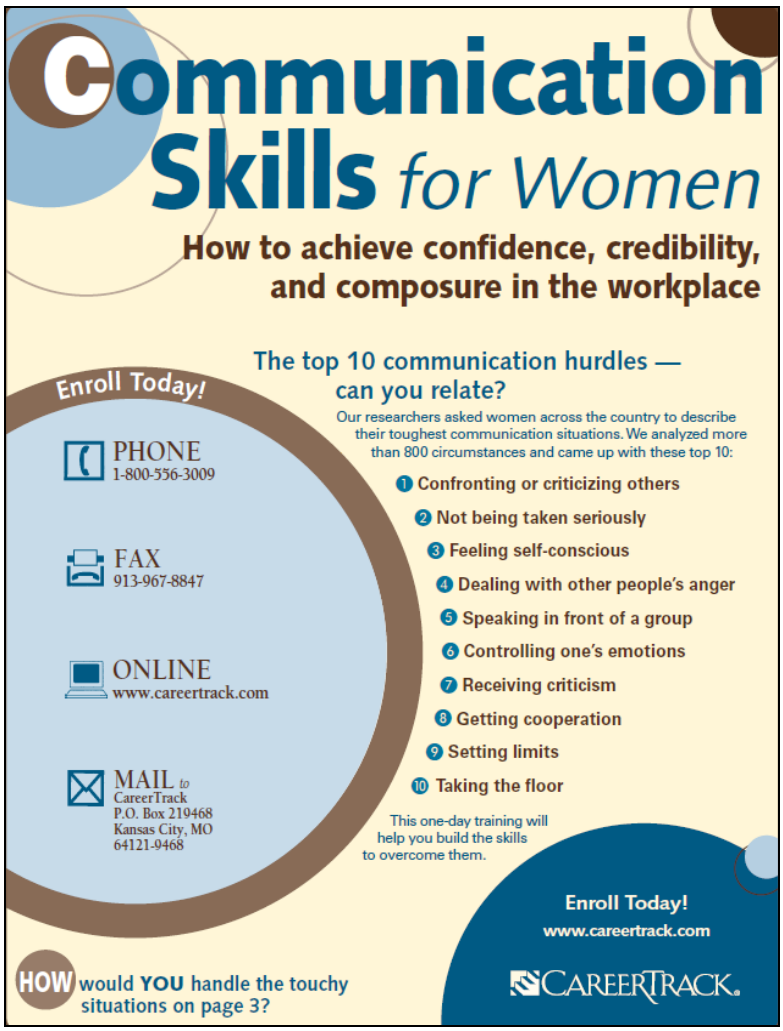

Figure 1 Communication skills for women: How to achieve confidence, credibility, and composure in the workplace. (2012). [Brochure]. Mission, KS: Fred Pryor Seminars.

Moving past the seminar title's assumption that women are not 'confident,' 'credible,' or 'composed' in the workplace, tips such as "confronting or criticizing others," "controlling one's emotions," "receiving criticism," and "taking the floor," are promoted to be taught within a *one-day* seminar that promises to develop skills which "overcome" these "hurdles." However, these organizational skills (marketed as 'solutions') require women to violate social role prescriptions and face negative

sanctions and possible retribution for their gender role deviance. Women are thus faced with a double-bind in organizations: to choose between traditional feminine behaviors (submissive; which may inhibit career advancement) or traditional masculine behaviors (assertive; which likely enhance career development; Tinsley, Cheldelin, Schneider, & Amanatullah, 2009).

Despite the control dominant groups have within learning environments, non-dominant groups (e.g. women) often prefer online environments in lieu of face-to-face ones (Kummervold, et al., 2002). However, organizational CMC may not be the refuge non-dominant groups seek. Although CMC is an alternative interface within which to interact, that interaction is still founded upon deep-rooted social and language structures where inequalities persist. Thus, as "language may be a means of constructing and maintaining gendered power differentials in society. Therefore, CMC *could potentially magnify* [emphasis added], as opposed to moderate, the gender differences reported in face-to-face research" (Guiller & Durndell, 2007, p. 2243). As the current study shows, language *is*, in fact, "a means of constructing and maintaining gendered power differentials" (Guiller & Durndell, 2007, p. 2243) and, without physical and auditory social cues, language style is the main way to infer gender in CMC. Indeed, language style cues are more likely to be used in inferring gender within CMC than names given in signatures (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). For example, Herring (1994) discusses instances of questioning the gender of a message poster when there seemed to be disparity between their pseudonym name and their language style. When inferring gender from limited cues (e.g. language style) the power differentials and inequalities

constructed and maintained within those cues enhance the formidability of them. Moreover, although the decreased pressure for physical and auditory impression management within online environments may be an allure for non-dominant groups, it may also bring out overt gender biases within dominant groups. As Guiller and Durndell (2007) note:

> Differences in status may actually be accentuated in CMC if cues to gender are available. Low public-awareness levels in CMC (i.e., decreased concern about others' impressions) are associated with lower social pressures that make the expression of internalised gender biases unacceptable. Therefore, it is possible that the exclusive focus on language in text-based CMC could not only exacerbate existing asymmetrical power differences, but even create them. (p. 2243)

For example, as organizations turn to more CMC technologies with which to conduct business, questions surrounding non-dominant group inclusiveness and benefits of diversity within organizational CMC remain relevant (Kissack, 2010). Gressgård's (2011) research on virtual teams suggests that social interconnectedness and shared/mutual understanding are essential in developing a context that supports creativity and innovation, and he later suggests that small teams rich in diversity can lead to increased innovation. However, he goes on to say that during knowledge development phases, "planned idea-conflicts, or 'creative abrasion'... may be positive for the performance of innovation teams" (Gressgård, 2011, p. 110). This notion contradicts women's ways of learning within organizations. As Bierema (2001) states, "although

women learn through relationship, caring, and connection, many work environments effectively devalue such attributes, thus preventing women from experiencing full self-development at work" (p. 59). In regards to the current study, MP language within organizational CMC served to maintain dominance and subordinate FP language. Moreover, FP language users tended to use communication strategies that supported MP dominance. Thus, within a virtual team environment, where 'idea conflicts' are instigated as an innovative tool, organizations may actually be stifling the ideas of a large portion of their workforce.

Lastly, implications for virtual mentoring, or e-mentoring, which have received much attention for their benefits to the organizational 'bottom line,' warrant discussion. Kacmar, McManus, and Young (2012) suggest that:

> CMC can complement face-to-face, telephone, and other non-CMC technologies to support the development of business relationships... [And] in some environments CMC-based mentoring can be more beneficial to the organization than face-to-face relationships, provided that the communicating parties can use the CMC technologies effectively. (p. 2)

Kacmar and colleagues' (2012) focus on organizational benefits of virtual mentoring ignores structural barriers to non-dominant perspectives. For example, the perceived clarity of the message content between mentor and protégé is a significant indicator in the satisfaction of the relationship for the protégé (Kacmar, et al., 2012). Clarity of language, in general, is subjective, but within CMC, where social cues are restricted and non-dominant groups are often deemed 'inarticulate,' dominant measures of CMC

message clarity may inhibit mentor/protégé benefits. This may be especially true when mentors and protégé's utilize differing preferential language. Moreover, women's openness to mentoring (as determined by their epistemological way of knowing) influences their amenable acceptance to lessons learned during mentorship (Egan, 1996). However, as Bierema (2001) states, "mentoring has been cited as doing more to reinforce the status quo than to redistribute power among women and people of color in organizations" (p. 58).

In sum, organizational leaders and HRD professionals must keep these findings in mind when launching online initiatives that promise to cut costs and produce a high return on investment. The muteness of a portion of their workforce not only results in homogeny that could stifle innovation, but it allows for the prejudice toward non-dominant groups to continue. As Callahan (2007) suggests, "as [an HRD] field, we need to reflect upon the nature of our discourses and challenge ourselves to ask, 'In whose interest does this action *really* serve?'" (italics in original, p. 81). Future research is needed to determine strategies for altering the status quo in organizational CMC such that muted groups have a voice.

A muting process occurs within organizational CMC through the interaction of various strategies to gain dominance by MP participants and through various communication strategies by FP participants. Implications for online organizational initiatives such as e-learning, e-mentoring, training, and organizational development, rest on recognizing the issue and understanding the need to empower muted voices.

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APPENDIX A

Gender-Preferential Language Codes

Male-Preferential Language:

1. Opinions - stated beliefs and factual interpretations that are considered subjective
2. Insults - Insults are comments to another participant that convey rudeness and insolence toward that participant
3. Intensive adjectives - serve to provide exceptional descriptive emphasis to the noun it precedes
4. Giving a directive - guide and command the intended person according to the speaker's intentions
5. Disagreeing - to differ in opinion or dissent from previous comments
6. Statements emphasizing differences - highlight areas of dissimilarity between oneself and another individual or group of individuals

Female-Preferential Language:

1. References to emotion - statements referring to one's own sentiments and personal feelings or references of *perceptions* of sentiments and personal feelings held by another
2. Requests for information
3. Personal information - the sharing of information regarding one's private life
4. Self-derogatory comments - statements that intentionally belittle oneself
5. Compliments to recipient
6. Apologies
7. Subordinating conjunctions - join subordinate clauses to main clauses (e.g. after, although, unless, even if/though, since, as soon as, whenever, while)
8. Modals - auxiliary verbs that combine with action verbs to designate mood or tense such as intention, obligation, or necessity (e.g. can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, would); hedges - lessens impact prior to a statement (e.g. slightly, somewhat, perhaps)
9. Intensive adverb - to intensify and give emphasis to the noun it precedes (e.g. extremely, excessively)
10. Referring to a previous comment
11. Agreeing with another's statement
12. Statements emphasizing similarities or solidarity

APPENDIX B

Co-Cultural Communication Codes

1. Avoidance – refrain from interaction with dominant groups
2. Idealized communication – downplaying differences; emphasizing similarities
3. Mirroring – assimilation communication style to dominant group
4. Respectful communication – stroking ideals of dominant group; attempts to appear non-threatening or assertive
5. Self-censorship – hold back, say nothing, or blow off offending remarks
6. ~~Extensive preparation~~ – rehearsal and planning prior to interaction with dominant group (NOT USED)
7. ~~Countering stereotypes~~ – avoiding topics and behaviors that confirm negative stereotypes (NOT USED)
8. ~~Manipulating stereotypes~~ – conform to common stereotypes for personal gain (NOT USED)
9. Self-assured communication – Just 'being themselves'
10. Increased visibility – rather than avoidance, increasing visibility is an attempt to decrease neutrality or invisibility
11. Utilization of liaisons – using friends or liaisons from the dominant group to handle a problem
12. Confrontational tactics – belligerent methods to be heard

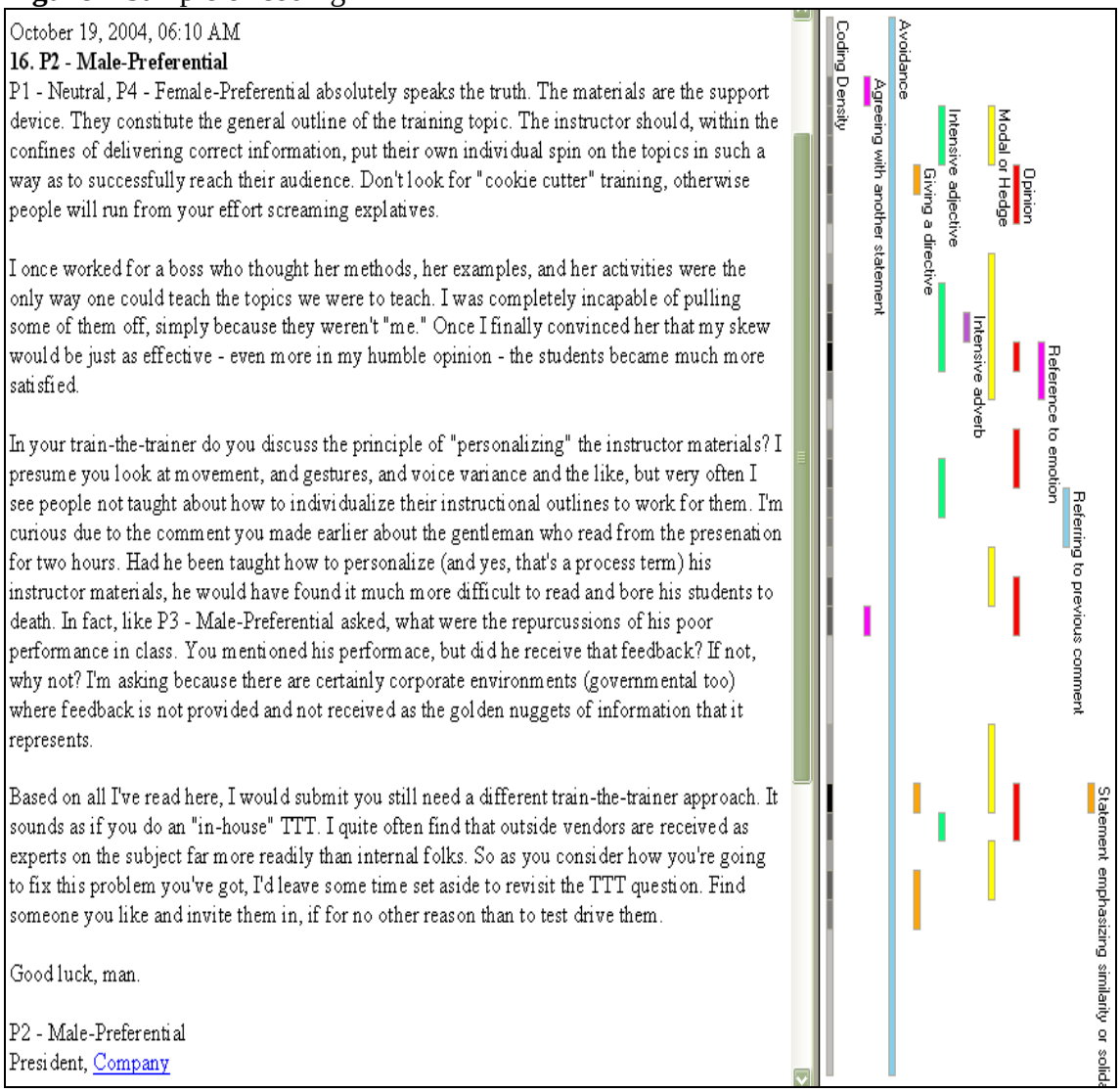
APPENDIX C

Table 2 Steps to Data Analysis

		Codes
Step 1 Code for Preferential Language	Male-Preferential	Opinions Insults Intensive Adjectives Giving a Directive Disagreeing Statements Emphasizing Differences
	Female-Preferential	References to Emotion Requests for Information Self-Derogatory Comments Compliments to the Recipient Apologies Subordinating Conjunctions Modals and Hedges Intensive Adverbs Referring to a Previous Comment Agreeing with Another Individual's Statement Statements Emphasizing Similarities or Solidarity Personal Information
Step 2a Code for Co-Cultural Communication Strategies	Assimilation	Idealized Communication Respectful Communication Self-Censorship ~~Extensive Preparation~~ ~~Manipulating Stereotypes~~ Mirroring
	Accommodation	Increased Visibility ~~Countering Stereotypes~~ Self-Assured Communication Utilization of Liaisons Confrontational Tactics
	Separation	Avoidance Self-Assured Communication
Step 2b Constant Comparative Analysis		Inductive analysis tool which seeks to derive codes and themes from raw data

APPENDIX D

Figure 2 Sample of coding



APPENDIX E

Table 3 Percent of Preferential Language Codes within each Site

		Nursing Site	Training & Development Site	Mechanical Engineering Site
Female-Preferential Language	Ref. to Emotion	32.42	11.47	9.55
	Req. For Information	1.50	3.96	2.58
	Personal Information	3.14	1.74	2.27
	Self-Derogatory Comments	1.96	1.82	2.12
	Compliments to Recipient	3.79	5.38	7.27
	Apologies	1.83	2.93	1.21
	Subordinating Conjunctions	6.93	10.05	8.33
	Modals & Hedges	25.36	39.48	41.97
	Intensive Adverbs	12.35	6.09	6.67
	Ref. to Prev. Comment	0.59	5.06	2.88
	Agreeing	3.27	7.04	6.82
	Emph. Similarity; Solidarity	6.86	4.98	8.33
TOTAL		**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**
Male-Preferential Language	Opinions	41.79	34.41	51.18
	Insults	6.12	6.27	5.83
	Intensive Adjectives	14.27	19.43	15.66
	Giving a Directive	15.86	11.85	7.29
	Disagreeing	11.10	19.51	12.02
	Emph. Differences	10.87	8.54	8.01
TOTAL		**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**

APPENDIX F

Table 4 Mean Frequencies per 100 words and Preferential Language Designation by Participant

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	1	4.46	4.26	Female
P	2	4.58	6.41	Male
P	3	4.62	5.87	Male
P	4	14.20	10.54	Female
P	5	4.32	7.53	Male
P	6	4.79	6.12	Male
P	7	1.02	1.81	Male
P	8	1.85	7.41	Male
P	9	5.98	3.34	Female
P	10	10.53	5.26	Female
P	11	3.60	2.92	Female
P	12	7.89	2.63	Female
P	13	2.63	6.49	Male
P	14	4.62	0.00	Female
P	15	0.00	5.81	Male
P	16	4.12	2.06	Female
P	17	3.84	2.23	Female
P	18	2.25	3.37	Male
P	19	4.55	1.52	Female
P	20	4.82	6.02	Male
P	21	3.26	0.72	Female
P	22	9.76	2.44	Female
P	23	3.27	1.96	Female
P	24	3.51	3.12	Female
P	25	3.74	3.61	Female
P	26	4.01	2.53	Female
P	27	3.68	0.85	Female
P	28	0.00	4.55	Male
P	29	2.06	1.18	Female
P	30	0.44	6.17	Male
P	31	2.70	3.90	Male
P	32	5.60	3.56	Female
P	33	2.26	1.51	Female
P	34	2.78	2.78	Neutral
P	35	2.70	0.00	Female

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	36	0.00	3.45	Male
P	37	3.57	1.19	Female
P	38	2.17	1.09	Female
P	39	3.69	3.23	Female
P	40	7.41	2.96	Female
P	41	5.10	2.48	Female
P	42	3.24	2.05	Female
P	43	5.75	2.30	Female
P	44	3.03	0.67	Female
P	45	3.24	2.70	Female
P	46	3.69	2.01	Female
P	47	3.56	4.00	Male
P	48	3.33	3.00	Female
P	49	2.33	2.91	Male
P	50	3.70	7.41	Male
P	51	3.95	2.47	Female
P	52	4.88	1.22	Female
P	53	1.85	1.85	Neutral
P	54	4.05	2.31	Female
P	55	3.63	1.61	Female
P	56	1.59	1.59	Neutral
P	57	3.35	2.79	Female
P	58	4.76	1.59	Female
P	59	2.53	3.80	Male
P	60	4.39	3.72	Female
P	61	3.33	4.44	Male
P	62	7.41	1.59	Female
P	63	2.96	2.77	Female
P	64	0.57	3.98	Male
P	65	1.52	7.58	Male
P	66	1.75	2.19	Male
P	67	2.65	2.12	Female
P	68	3.88	3.88	Neutral
P	69	3.85	3.85	Neutral
P	70	5.83	0.00	Female
P	71	1.41	3.52	Male
P	72	1.60	6.40	Male

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	73	7.14	4.76	Female
P	74	5.84	2.60	Female
P	75	1.30	6.49	Male
P	76	5.44	4.08	Female
P	77	4.94	2.47	Female
P	78	7.22	3.09	Female
P	79	5.62	1.12	Female
P	80	7.22	0.00	Female
P	81	3.10	1.55	Female
P	82	2.17	4.35	Male
P	83	3.42	2.56	Female
P	84	4.19	1.86	Female
P	85	9.84	1.64	Female
P	86	8.79	2.20	Female
P	87	3.31	1.10	Female
P	88	6.32	0.00	Female
P	89	2.82	0.00	Female
P	90	4.90	2.94	Female
P	91	2.88	0.72	Female
P	92	1.15	1.15	Neutral
P	93	2.42	4.44	Male
P	94	5.00	10.00	Male
P	95	0.00	7.69	Male
P	96	5.40	0.57	Female
P	97	3.57	1.38	Female
P	98	3.78	2.16	Female
P	99	0.00	3.70	Male
P	100	5.88	0.00	Female
P	101	4.42	3.54	Female
P	102	0.00	2.78	Male
P	103	3.19	2.13	Female
P	104	3.10	1.38	Female
P	105	9.38	6.25	Female
P	106	2.63	1.17	Female
P	107	4.29	2.86	Female
P	108	0.49	1.96	Male
P	109	3.80	3.36	Female

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	110	4.42	6.19	Male
P	111	3.91	4.23	Male
P	112	3.73	1.07	Female
P	113	4.88	3.25	Female
P	114	5.07	2.29	Female
P	115	6.96	4.35	Female
P	116	1.97	2.63	Male
P	117	3.19	3.69	Male
P	118	1.37	2.74	Male
P	119	1.64	6.56	Male
P	120	3.28	1.39	Female
P	121	4.82	2.41	Female
P	122	7.14	0.00	Female
P	123	4.90	2.10	Female
P	124	10.00	0.00	Female
P	125	4.17	0.42	Female
P	126	0.00	5.56	Male
P	127	3.96	1.58	Female
P	128	3.98	1.99	Female
P	129	0.00	6.25	Male
P	130	20.00	0.00	Female
P	131	2.78	2.05	Female
P	132	3.23	1.29	Female
P	133	5.95	0.00	Female
P	134	5.05	0.46	Female
P	135	5.02	1.37	Female
P	136	3.90	2.10	Female
P	137	4.17	2.50	Female
P	138	5.63	2.82	Female
P	139	4.65	0.00	Female
P	140	3.70	1.95	Female
P	141	5.49	2.63	Female
P	142	3.70	1.85	Female
P	143	3.30	5.49	Male
P	144	4.27	1.62	Female
P	145	0.00	0.00	Neutral
P	146	0.00	2.22	Male

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	147	4.55	2.53	Female
P	148	3.39	0.90	Female
P	149	0.00	0.00	Neutral
P	150	0.00	0.00	Neutral
P	151	1.33	1.33	Neutral
P	152	0.00	2.33	Male
P	153	3.33	0.00	Female
P	154	3.21	2.36	Female
P	155	4.88	0.00	Female
P	156	2.48	0.62	Female
P	157	4.69	2.34	Female
P	158	2.13	2.13	Neutral
P	159	2.95	1.07	Female
P	160	5.64	1.54	Female
P	161	2.89	0.80	Female
P	162	3.60	0.86	Female
P	163	2.05	2.05	Neutral
P	164	3.95	0.66	Female
P	165	2.56	2.56	Neutral
P	166	5.13	1.28	Female
P	167	5.56	5.56	Neutral
P	168	7.32	0.00	Female
P	169	7.14	0.00	Female
P	170	5.88	1.96	Female
P	171	3.39	0.00	Female
P	172	5.77	0.00	Female
P	173	3.45	1.72	Female
P	174	2.68	1.53	Female
P	175	2.48	2.97	Male
P	176	5.00	7.50	Male
P	177	2.01	2.96	Male
P	178	0.42	0.00	Female
P	179	8.36	1.82	Female
P	180	3.85	3.37	Female
P	181	8.33	4.17	Female
P	182	3.17	1.98	Female
P	183	1.72	2.41	Male

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	184	4.52	3.33	Female
P	185	1.40	2.34	Male
P	186	4.27	1.71	Female
P	187	2.82	2.62	Female
P	188	1.75	3.15	Male
P	189	8.51	2.13	Female
P	190	1.64	3.28	Male
P	191	7.25	1.45	Female
P	192	33.33	11.11	Female
P	193	5.38	3.23	Female
P	194	7.95	2.27	Female
P	195	7.46	2.99	Female
P	196	4.01	3.79	Neutral
P	197	2.60	2.08	Female
P	198	10.00	0.00	Female
P	199	6.90	1.38	Female
P	200	10.53	5.26	Female
P	201	4.00	6.00	Male
P	202	3.54	1.18	Female
P	203	2.74	3.37	Male
P	204	2.42	3.38	Male
P	205	2.97	1.92	Female
P	206	0.65	4.84	Male
P	207	1.98	1.59	Female
P	208	2.50	2.50	Neutral
P	209	2.65	2.65	Neutral
P	210	3.52	3.52	Neutral
P	211	0.88	1.77	Male
P	212	2.60	5.19	Male
P	213	1.53	2.45	Male
P	214	0.97	0.97	Neutral
P	215	6.40	2.77	Female
P	216	3.01	3.61	Male
P	217	4.15	2.59	Female
P	218	6.25	1.04	Female
P	219	0.00	3.17	Male
P	220	5.62	2.25	Female

Participant		FP Mean Frequency	MP Mean Frequency	Preferential Language
P	221	9.40	3.42	Female
P	222	3.23	1.61	Female
P	223	9.65	3.51	Female
P	224	4.76	7.14	Male
P	225	3.23	3.23	Neutral
P	226	4.92	6.56	Male
P	227	6.90	5.17	Female
P	228	7.89	2.63	Female
P	229	8.57	4.29	Female
P	230	4.12	3.09	Female
P	231	5.48	1.37	Female
P	232	6.61	2.48	Female
P	233	2.47	0.00	Female
P	234	4.07	1.63	Female
P	235	3.63	4.44	Male
P	236	9.76	2.44	Female
P	237	4.14	4.14	Neutral
P	238	7.69	7.59	Neutral
P	239	5.30	0.00	Female
P	240	4.43	2.66	Female
P	241	3.31	2.44	Female
P	242	2.11	2.92	Male
P	243	2.34	2.78	Male
P	244	2.06	2.85	Male
P	245	3.05	2.43	Female
P	246	1.36	1.58	Male

APPENDIX G

Table 5 Percent Participants using Pronouns by Preferential Language and by Site

	Nursing Site	Training & Dev. Site	Mechanical Eng. Site
MP using Masc. Pronouns	6.25	28.57	35.00
MP using Fem. Pronouns	12.50	21.43	0.00
FP using Masc. Pronouns	21.43	30.43	13.51
FP using Fem. Pronouns	29.59	26.09	5.41
Neutral using Masc. Pronouns	7.69	0.00	25.00
Neutral using Fem. Pronouns	15.38	0.00	0.00
TOTAL % Part. using Pronouns	**27.97**	**28.95**	**23.08**

APPENDIX H

Table 6 Percent usage of Co-cultural communication strategies

	Separation 29.13%	Accommodation 25.59%	Assimilation 62.20%
Nonassertive	Avoidance 12.20%	Increased Visibility 1.97% ~~Countering Stereotypes~~	Idealized Communication 15.35% Respectful Communication 26.77% Self-censorship 2.36%
Assertive	Self-assured Communication[6] (16.93%)	Self-assured Communication (16.93%) Utilization of Liaisons 5.12%	~~Extensive Preparation~~ ~~Manipulating Stereotypes~~
Aggressive		Confrontational Tactics 1.57%	Mirroring 17.72%

Adapted From: Orbe, M. P. (1996). Laying the foundation for co-cultural communication theory: An inductive approach to studying 'non-dominant' communication strategies and the factors that influence them. *Communication Studies, 47*(3), 157-176.

[6] Self-assured communication is used by individuals seeking separation *and* seeking accommodation outcomes

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